

# MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

OCTOBER, 1922

Vol. LXXVII

NUMBER 1

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## Times Have Changed

A NOVEL OF UP-TO-DATE ADVENTURE IN THE BOHEMIA AND  
THE SUBURBIA OF NEW YORK

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OUT in the corridor of the high school building a clock struck six, and in the principal's office Mark O'Rell started out of his reverie with the guilty realization that he was likely to be late for dinner. He and Marjorie had been married almost a year, and he had never been late for dinner yet. Now and then, to be sure, a thoroughly submerged but not yet entirely dead fragment of his personality whispered that this was too good to last—that he would have to begin being late for dinner some time; but it mustn't happen to-night, for Aunt Cordelia was dining with them.

Aunt Cordelia believed in punctuality, and Mark wasn't quite sure that she believed in him. He had married into the family, and had been gathered to the family's extensive and enthusiastic bosom; but

whenever he caught Aunt Cordelia's eye on him, he had an uneasy feeling that he was still more or less on probation. He mustn't be late to-night!

But he was already late enough to call for some explanation—to himself, if not to Marjorie. The day's work was over—the week's work, for to-morrow was Saturday, and Monday was Decoration Day. Three days of rest!

The last examination paper had been graded, the last report card approved. He had done everything that could serve as an excuse for keeping him in the office. He had even picked out the passage of "inspirational literature" which he would read to the school as part of the opening exercises on Tuesday morning. Because he thought it would be good for his pupils, and perhaps for himself as well, he had selected

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the opening of Emerson's "Essay on Self-Reliance":

Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string.

But at that moment Mark O'Rell profoundly distrusted himself. Something was the matter with him. He didn't want to go home—home from a dull office to the most wonderful girl in the world.

They hadn't quarreled; they couldn't quarrel. They were, as they often told each other, not only the perfect lovers, but the perfect friends. Still, he didn't want to go home.

Perhaps it was the spring that disturbed him; but the spring, in past years, had driven him to look for a girl, and now he had the most wonderful girl in the world. Perhaps it was the memories that had come back to him that afternoon, when he had to administer a stern rebuke to three boys whom the drawing teacher had caught shooting craps in the cloak room. The young rascals deserved the sharp language he had used on them, but the episode had recalled an evening in a little village back of Toul, nearly three years ago, when a certain Captain O'Rell, who was not at all like the respectable principal of Wynwood High School, had cleaned up some twelve hundred francs. Since remembering that war-time episode he had been making excuses for lingering at his desk, rereading Johnny Zane's letter that had come that afternoon, and staring out of the window.

The window was really to blame, he concluded. It looked eastward and downward over the roofs of Wynwood—"New Jersey's garden suburb, five hundred feet above the mosquitoes," as the local boosters boasted—over the smoke-shrouded reaches of the meadows and the dim ridge beyond. Above that ridge rose a jagged line of distant pinnacles, reddened by the setting sun—the sky line of Manhattan. Life would have been easier in Wynwood, and particularly in the Wynwood High School, with that sky line out of sight; for what it meant to O'Rell wasn't at all what it meant to Marjorie and her family.

The lure of the metropolis had brought O'Rell all the way from Missouri. A year out of college, he was principal of the high school in his home town, with a certain succession to the superintendency, a little money in the bank, and first place in the favor of the bank president's daughter.

When it became known that he was going to New York; the president had laid a fatherly hand on his shoulder, and had reminded him that Caesar would rather have been first in a little village than second in Rome; but O'Rell responded, with some confidence, that Caesar had eventually made himself the first in Rome.

When the war came, the bank president's daughter had married the cashier and was bringing up twins, while the emulator of Caesar was living in a furnished room, and reading copy on a morning newspaper at fifty dollars a week. By that time the objects of his ambition had become more moderate—a day job, more money, and a beautiful girl—almost any one would do—who for some obscure reason would love and cherish him, and would cook him perfect dinners in one of those perfect suburban bungalows described in the Sunday real estate section.

Now he had attained all three. He was the luckiest man in the world; yet he sat morosely at his desk while dinner was on the stove. He wanted, to-night, to be over there among the skyscrapers.

Of course, life in Wynwood wasn't exactly exile from New York. Half the town commuted. Marjorie's father was a slave to the time-table, and so were most of the uncles and cousins of the great Redman clan, which had swallowed O'Rell when he and Marjorie came back from the war engaged. For them Wynwood wasn't exile; it was a refuge, to which they crawled back wearily at the close of day, like primitive man retiring into his cave.

To be sure, he worked in Wynwood; but he and Marjorie weren't exiled. She did all her shopping in town, and when they were first married they had established a ritual custom that was still observed. On the first Saturday night in each month, just after pay day, they went into New York together, dined beyond their means at a glittering restaurant, saw a play, and came home on the twelve ten. The first two or three times they had finished off with supper at a dancing café, and had stayed till the one thirty-five; but supper cafés were duller and more expensive since prohibition, so that part of the ceremony had been abandoned.

Still, they had their monthly outing; and as Marjorie often observed, that was hilarity enough for anybody. Besides, there was the rather exacting social life of Wyn-



wood. That was hilarious, too, but somehow it was different, unless you had grown up in Wynwood.

O'Rell knew what Marjorie would say about this matter that was on his mind. He also knew what Aunt Cordelia would say, and in the Redman family Aunt Cordelia was the mouthpiece of public opinion. Because he knew, he hadn't mentioned it; indeed, he hadn't thought of it seriously till Zane's letter came this afternoon.

Dinners of the New York alumni club of his college fraternity had been pretty dull even in the old days, before prohibition had dried the sap out of them, and before the war had scattered his friends. Probably this affair would bore him. Besides, it came on Saturday night, and Marjorie would certainly have made some engagement in Wynwood.

Nevertheless, Zane's letter had made him restless. Part of it was:

For God's sake tear yourself away from the bridal bower for just one evening, and help us keep this thing from being too deadly. It's hard enough to get a crowd, now that there's nothing to drink; and if this is a frost we can never get up another. Byron Blish is back from Los Angeles, and if you'll come in we can get the old quartet together to liven things up.

By the way, one of the speakers is a man from your town—Hinton K. Atlee, the broker. Do you know him? We had to put him on the program when Senator McRoss fell down on us; so there'll be somebody to keep you company on the late train home. I suppose your wife would never let you stay away over night.

O'Rell thought that last sentence was quite unnecessary. Marjorie would let him do anything he wanted to do. Of course, she knew that he would never want to spend a night in town without her. The perfect understanding between them was what made their marriage so ideal, and so incomprehensible to hardened bachelors like Johnny Zane.

But, and moreover, there was Hinton K. Atlee. He was a member of the family, having married a cousin so distant that nobody but a Redman could ever have traced the relationship. He was president of the Wynwood board of education. It might be a good idea to let him see that the high school principal was well thought of by the brothers in town. Mark wondered if the idea would appeal to Marjorie.

The telephone bell broke in on his meditations, and with a deep conviction of sin he answered nervously:

"Hello, darling! Is that you?"

"It's your wife," Marjorie laughed. "I hope that's who you mean! What in the world is keeping you?"

"I had a lot of extra work," he said promptly—so promptly that he alarmed himself.

The lie had been automatic, and he had never lied to Marjorie before.

"Well, I've started the steak, so you'd better hurry. But do you mind stopping at the drug store and getting some cough drops? They're for Aunt Cordelia—I've asked her to spend the night. You will hurry, won't you?"

Another ton or two of depression fell on him. Aunt Cordelia lived clear across town, so it was natural that Marjorie should ask her to spend the night whenever she came to dinner. Still, it seemed to him that they were getting a good deal of Aunt Cordelia. Some day, no doubt, he would be used to it; but not yet—not yet—not yet.

However, he hurried, as automatically as he had lied.

## II

In the corridor he met a group of girls from his senior class, coming down from the gymnasium in middy blouses and white skirts. They were giggling, irreverent creatures, a perennial trial to O'Rell. Their attitude was lacking in the respect due to a principal who might be young, but who was certainly married.

Because he was a modest young man, O'Rell never realized that their nervous hilarity concealed a violent and romantic admiration for him. He was tall and robust, with the sort of face and figure that is best set off by the rough tweeds that he always wore. He had tried to put out of mind the episode in the Argonne that had won him his D. S. C., along with the other unpleasant memories of the war. He didn't dream that almost any girl in his school could have repeated from memory every word of the citation, as the Wynwood newspaper had republished it when his engagement to Marjorie was announced; and it couldn't possibly have occurred to him that they all regarded Marjorie as the luckiest girl in the world.

Yet they did, and because they were too young either to conceal or to display their feelings, they treated him with a nervous, awkward impertinence that left him blushing when they deserted him on the steps of

the building. He blushed still more when one of them, hanging back from the group, asked if she could speak with him alone.

This particular girl had always made O'Rell blush. She was too mature for her eighteen years, and too thoroughly aware of her maturity, and of her rather flashy good looks. There was something vaguely queer and disturbing about her eyes.

"I'm in a hurry, Irene," he told her. "You go my way as far as the corner, don't you? Then walk along with me."

She fell into step beside him.

"I wonder if you'd tell me something, Mr. O'Rell!"

"Do my best," he assured her.

"Am I going to pass in trigonometry? Because, if I don't, I can't graduate."

"We were going to tell all the seniors how they stood next week," he objected. "Can't you wait?"

"No, Mr. O'Rell, I feel as if I just can't wait any longer. It means so much to me! I suppose it wouldn't be quite right to tell me ahead of the others; but—won't you?"

She flashed a languishing glance up at him, and again he felt uneasy at the look in those eyes.

"Maybe you don't know," she went on. "My father and mother are dead, and I live with my uncle, Jim Teener. He keeps the lunch room down by the station. He's a queer man, Uncle Jim is. He's kind of proud of me, and he says if I graduate from high school with the same class I started with, he'll pay my way through college; but if I don't, he'll put me to work—make me wait on table in the lunch room."

They stopped at the corner where the school street debouched into the elm-shaded avenue.

"I'm all right but the trigonometry," said Irene dolefully.

She would never know any trigonometry; nobody on earth could teach her. O'Rell couldn't send out graduates improperly prepared, especially if they were going on to college.

"What do you want to do after you leave college?" he asked.

"Uncle Jim says I could teach school."

"H-m!" O'Rell grunted. "Do you want to teach school?"

"No!" she burst out. "I'd hate it!"

"Good girl!" O'Rell caught himself guiltily; he was betraying a trade secret. "What do you want to do?"

Irene looked away toward the reddened

pinnacles that were fading into the eastern horizon.

"I want to go to New York," she confessed, "and be an actress."

"Good Lord! Isn't there anything you can do in Wynwood?"

"Who would want to do anything in Wynwood?"

O'Rell sighed. It was not for him to reproach another victim of the sky line.

"Teaching is a pretty hard life," he warned her.

"Oh, it wouldn't be hard for me! I've got friends with a pull. I'd lots rather do that than go to college, but of course Uncle Jim—"

O'Rell was sincerely sorry for the girl. He had seen her like before, cramped in a small town with ambitions that leaped to the stars; and though he felt that something was wrong, he didn't quite see what could be done about it.

"I'm afraid you can't graduate this year," he said wearily. "Your work in trigonometry hasn't been anywhere near up to the mark, and we can't pass unprepared students on to college."

She shrank nearer to him as two women passed in the shadows. O'Rell stepped aside and raised his hat—he knew nearly everybody in Wynwood—and then he saw that Irene was trembling.

"I shouldn't have told you that," he added, with belated scruples and a feeling that discipline ought to be maintained. "You won't give me away, will you?"

He laughed as he said it, but Irene's voice was earnest as she repeated:

"No, I won't give you away; but gosh, that lunch room!"

"Don't take it so hard," he said kindly. "After all, it's what you've got in you that counts. Emerson says, 'Trust thyself.'"

"Emerson never had to live with Uncle Jim!"

O'Rell felt that it was his business to say something to help the girl. He didn't know what, exactly; but a principal who understands his job ought to help his pupils in their times of trouble. He cleared his throat once or twice, and laid a fatherly hand on her shoulder.

"There, now, Irene! Wynwood isn't such a bad place."

"What? This rotten hole? I hate it! Everybody pretends to like it, but I bet that if the truth was known, there's lots of others that hate it, too!"

The honest young man from Missouri couldn't resist that.

"You're right!" he exploded. "I hate it—sometimes," he qualified hastily.

"Oh, Mr. O'Rell!" she sighed ecstatically. "I always knew you and me was kindred souls!"

Mark was startled, though reassuring second thought told him that her vocabulary was undoubtedly borrowed from the screen, her phrases from subtitles. Still, she had relaxed, and was leaning against his shoulder. That wouldn't do.

"But what shall I do?" she murmured. "I'm at the crossroads of my life, right now, and I need some true friend's advice."

He didn't quite know what she ought to do, so he fell back on more platitudes.

"You're a good little girl, Irene. Do what you ought to do—what you feel is in you. Don't lose your nerve. Look here, I'm not going to talk like a school-teacher; just this once I'll talk to you like one good fellow to another—only don't tell anybody about it. Brace up, set your teeth, and trust yourself!"

"I'd never trust myself if I stayed in Wynwood, in that lunch room!"

"Well," said O'Rell cheerily, "lots of us are too good for our jobs, or think we are; but we've got to make the best of it, even if it is a bore. We all have to stand a good deal we don't like. Just between you and me, Irene, in perfect confidence, sometimes I'm bored to death myself. I hate the infernal routine, the damned treadmill that I'm pounding away on every day; but I've got to make the best of it. Life deals us all a bad hand now and then. Do what's before you as hard as you can; then you'll succeed, and we'll all be proud of you."

He stopped, blushing again. Somehow he couldn't help being indecently sanctimonious. After all, he wasn't going to have to wait on table in the lunch room.

"Would *you* be proud of me?" Irene asked earnestly.

"Sure I'd be proud of you! Now, don't cry. Be a brave little girl. Of course it's hard, but we all have to stand it."

"I won't cry," Irene promised with a sigh. "I want you to know how much you've done for me, and how much I appreciate your confidence. Believe me, no third person shall ever know what has passed between us; but I always knew you felt that way about it. And I *will* make you proud of me!"

She was standing very close to him—too close; and now she raised her head and looked into his eyes. He knew he ought to break away, but he delayed his withdrawal for a moment; for, looking straight into her eyes, he realized at last why they always gave him that uneasy feeling. One of them was glass.

He stood motionless from sheer surprise. Irene evidently misunderstood; for suddenly she rose on tiptoe, and her lips were seeking his. He dodged, like a loyal husband, and felt her moist mouth brush his chin. Then she broke away without a word, and hurried off down the side street.

In the next thirty seconds Mark O'Rell made more good resolutions than he had ever made in all his life before. Never again would he speak to this girl alone, or let any girl in the high school get within ten feet of him, or tell anybody what he really thought about Wynwood.

The little fool must be crazy. How could he face her on Tuesday morning? He would ignore her hereafter. He wouldn't tell students in the high school whether they were going to pass, or graduate. No more confidences—all his remarks hereafter from the public platform! He would give no more good advice; for his sense of responsibility for Irene's welfare, his compunction at her inability to graduate, had led him into this insane, impossible catastrophe. It must never happen again.

Thank God nobody knew! For Irene would keep still. She would have to—he would see to that.

Gradually the turmoil of his thoughts subsided, and the facts of life once more claimed his attention. The steak must be nearly done, and he must get Aunt Cordelia's cough drops; so at last he put this strange occurrence in the back of his mind, and went on up the street.

After a moment the two women who had been watching him from the shadows down the block went on too.

### III

As O'Rell ran up his front steps, he had begun to recover from the shock; and the light of the rose lamp glowing in his living room raised his spirits considerably. This house was the house of which he had always dreamed. Wynwood and the Redmans might be rather oppressive, but they had treated him well.



Of course, he hadn't foreseen that when he met Marjorie on the transport, coming home from France. She belonged to a unit of college girls that had operated diet kitchens for war refugees; and that was all he knew about her when they became engaged, three days out from Brest. Before they had time or inclination to get down to details, the voyage was over, and they were disembarking at Hoboken into the arms of a whole battalion of Redmans who had come down to welcome Marjorie.

Her relatives didn't seem upset by an unexpected fiancé. Mark was passed down the line of aunts to be kissed, and back up along the line of uncles to be congratulated. Then, while he was still suffering from shock, he and Marjorie were carried off to Wynwood in the midst of a whole caravan of automobiles occupied by assorted Redmans. From that moment the individual Mark O'Rell had disappeared; now he was only a member of the family.

To be sure, he had perceived later that the shock to him could have been nothing like the shock to the Redmans—a shock that became more devastating when he related his short and simple annals to the assembled family that evening.

None of the Redmans had ever worked on a newspaper, or been born in Missouri. They had inhabited northern New Jersey since the glacial period. Indeed, there was reason to suppose that it was their aggressive geniality that had melted the ice. But Marjorie had picked him out, and they seemed to feel that if he was good enough for Marjorie he must have some merit. At any rate, he could be assimilated.

In that first week of lunches at the various households of the clan, and dinner dances at the country club with Marjorie's married friends, he occasionally came to the surface long enough to mutter in somebody's ear that he must begin to look for a job. The Redmans ignored the sordid suggestion. When he persisted, it was intimated that the family would look after that; and, since he was having the time of his life, he left it to the family.

Of course Marjorie must live in Wynwood; and it presently appeared that her mother had been nourishing a lifelong hatred of the time-table. Marjorie's husband mustn't commute. They were going to be so happy that he would want to come home to lunch.

Hinton K. Atlee knew how the Red-

mans felt. When he found that his high school principal, who had gone away to the war, had found a better job, and wasn't coming back, nothing was more natural than his turning to Marjorie's fiancé, who had once been a high school principal.

To O'Rell this day job, with more money, was part of the stupendous and incredible luck that had begun when he met the most wonderful girl in the world. Some time passed before he realized that he could no more have refused the job than he could have broken his engagement.

The acquisition of the perfect suburban bungalow was as easy as the acquisition of a job. Marjorie's father lent them the money for the cash payment, Cousin Felix, in the bank, got them easy terms on the second mortgage, and the wedding presents practically furnished the house. The honeymoon was contrived with the aid of Uncle Dudley's car and Cousin Martha's camp in the Adirondacks; and it soon appeared that Marjorie was a better cook than Mark had ever known before.

Yes, he was the luckiest man in the world. If his eyes sometimes wearied of a landscape in which it was impossible to look in any direction without seeing a Redman, that was sheer ingratitude. As he opened his front door, he felt unworthy of the fatted calf.

From his favorite armchair beside the fireplace, her expansive lap overrun by a jungle growth of knitting, Aunt Cordelia waved a waggish finger at him.

"You're late, young man! Your wife will begin to have her suspicions, if this sort of thing goes on! No, don't hang up your hat. I'll wager you forgot my cough drops. Now didn't you?"

From the dining room door Marjorie looked in, swathed in a huge white apron.

"Hello, Mark! Just in time! I hope you didn't forget Aunt Cordelia's cough drops." Then, as he put aside his hat and stick with some deliberation: "Well, aren't you going to kiss me?"

"When I get around to it. I gathered that the first thing was to deliver the cough drops."

As he handed them to Aunt Cordelia, there was an ominous sputtering in the kitchen, and Marjorie disappeared. So his dignified rebuke had missed fire; he had punished nobody but himself. He couldn't expect Marjorie to let the steak burn for the sake of the regular evening greeting.



It was the first time they had missed it. He seemed to be setting a number of precedents to-day.

The incident depressed him. Aunt Cordelia's playful inquisition into his movements depressed him still more; and the perfect dinner which was presently set before him did not wholly restore his good humor. Marjorie looked him over with some anxiety.

"You must have had an awfully hard day, dear! I'm so glad you'll get these three days of rest. I told Zella we'd come over to-morrow night. She's having two tables of bridge, and a little supper. Martha and George want us for dinner on Sunday, and some golf afterward; and then there's the club dance Monday night."

"Sounds like a rest!" he grunted.

"Well, it will be a change, dear; and I think you need it. You haven't looked so well lately. We can go out to the club for tennis to-morrow, if you like, and have dinner there before we go to Zella's."

Now was the crucial moment. If he didn't speak now, he might as well forever after hold his peace.

"I had thought of going out to a dinner to-morrow evening," he said rather huskily. "It's my fraternity alumni club."

"I didn't know there were enough Phi Sigmas in Wynwood to have a club," said Marjorie.

"This is in town," he explained, not without apprehension.

"In New York?" Marjorie inquired.

"In New York!" said Aunt Cordelia.

"Yes," said O'Rell, "in New York. I had a note about it this afternoon, from Johnny Zane. You probably remember him, Marjorie."

"Johnny Zane? Oh, yes—he gave us the candlesticks."

"So he did, and I haven't seen him since the wedding."

"I'm sure that isn't our fault," Marjorie protested. "I wrote and asked him to come out to dinner some time."

"It's a long way out," Mark observed moodily. "Zane's on the dinner committee, and he wants a good turnout. I'll see people I haven't seen for years—Byron Blish and—"

"Blish? I never met him, did I?"

"Probably not. He was in California when we married. He's been there for years. Just come back. He's in the movies."

"Movies!" said Aunt Cordelia, evidently feeling that neutrality was no longer possible. "Movies! Dear me!"

"Not an actor," Mark explained hurriedly. "A press agent."

Aunt Cordelia said nothing, but her compressed lips and dilated nostrils delivered a whole oration.

"Mr. Atlee's going to be one of the speakers," he added hastily. "I thought I really ought to be there."

"That does make a difference," Marjorie admitted; "but I've promised Zella."

"And I've promised Johnny Zane." He wondered if his consternation showed in his face. That lie, too, had been automatic. He was getting the habit. "After all, we see Zella and Howard and the rest of them two or three times a week. They won't miss us this once."

"Us?" said Marjorie. "Am I going to this dinner, too?"

"No, it's a stag affair. Of course, I don't like to think of you—but you could go to Zella's anyway."

"And spend the evening cranking the phonograph while the others dance, or having somebody cut out at the end of every rubber? No, thank you; I'd rather stay at home and read."

Aunt Cordelia looked as if she might say much, but was refraining from an excess of Christian forbearance.

"What kind of a dinner is it?" Marjorie asked, and he wondered if it was mere imagination that made him read suspicion in her tone.

"Why, good Heavens, it's nothing to make a fuss about—just a lot of good citizens like me and Mr. Atlee getting together to hear some dull speeches. I used to go every year before the war."

"Where is it going to be?"

"Dondin's."

"I don't know what Zella will think. I told her we'd be there."

"Oh, well, if you insist—"

Marjorie's cheeks flamed.

"Don't be stupid! Of course I don't insist. Go to your dinner, if you want to; only I wish you'd told me of it sooner."

He felt that this wish was not unreasonable. To hide a compunction which he felt he ought to admit, but not until somewhat later in the evening, he took out his pipe and began to fill it. Marjorie studied his face curiously, as if he had suddenly become a stranger.

"Good gracious, Mark! Did you cut yourself when you shaved this morning?"

"Not that I know of," he assured her; and then a sudden guilty memory turned his face pink.

"There's a red spot on your chin. It couldn't be a mosquito. Perhaps you ate too much cake last night."

"Maybe it will wash off," Mark said hastily, and escaped from the room in confusion.

Marjorie sat playing with a coffee spoon, her brows knitted. As the door closed behind Mark, Aunt Cordelia leaned forward with the air of a martyr to duty.

"You must be more firm with him, my dear. Your uncle began that way."

Uncle Frederick was the blot on the Redman escutcheon—a blot too dark to be mentioned lightly, even though he had only married into the family.

"Began what way?"

"Making excuses to go into town at night. You were too young to understand, I suppose, when I got my divorce; but, Marjorie, you are a woman and a wife now, and you still have to learn how a wife can suffer. Heaven knows I always did my duty as I saw it, but—"

"So does Mark. I know he wouldn't lie to me."

Aunt Cordelia smiled pityingly.

"Look at Mrs. Thormalin. Poor thing, she believed for ever so long that her husband stayed in town at night to make up his income tax!"

"Well, goodness gracious!" Marjorie flamed up. "You don't want me to believe that—"

"My dear, I don't want you to believe anything. Only don't be blind." Aunt Cordelia nodded her head as if it were weighted with all the wisdom of the ages. "Those of us who are older, Marjorie, can't forget what we've seen, and felt."

"Well, do you mean that you don't believe Mark is going to a fraternity dinner?"

Aunt Cordelia shook her sagacious head mysteriously.

"Who knows, Marjorie? Listen, dear—I know men, and I know women. Look at your husband—big, strong, virile, handsome—a real red-blooded man. I don't believe you really appreciate him, Marjorie. You don't understand how attractive he would be to a certain type of woman."

"I don't know whether I'm a certain

type of woman," Marjorie confessed; "but he's certainly attractive to me!"

"Be sure you're not the only one. Women like those big, rough men. They go simply wild about them. No doubt they threw themselves at his head, in France."

"Mark never looked at any of those French girls."

"How do you know?"

"He told me so," said Marjorie, feeling, as she said it, that the evidence was not altogether unassailable.

Aunt Cordelia sighed.

"I know! Your uncle used to tell me things, too. I should think you might have seen, anyway. There were girls on the boat with you. Didn't you notice how they looked at him?"

"I was too busy looking at him myself."

"Well, you can't say I haven't warned you. The trouble with you, Marjorie, is that you're so calm. I was calm, once. I had your serene confidence in my husband; but my eyes were opened, Marjorie, my eyes were opened! And when I see my niece's home exposed to the same assaults that finally ruined mine—"

"I haven't noticed any assaults."

"Marjorie, you don't realize it, but we older women do—the world is full of heartless women waiting to entrap men like Mark. You think I exaggerate. Well, I think it my duty to tell you that the girls in the high school seem perfectly infatuated with him. I've heard that from several sources."

"Kids! Of course they'd be crazy about a good-looking teacher."

"You needn't think it's confined to children. You needn't think you're the only woman who has felt the force of Mark's personality. Good Heavens, if I were younger I'd be infatuated with him myself! Oh, don't look at me like that. We good women cherish illusions about ourselves, but we're all sisters under our skins. We like somebody big and masterful, somebody rough and brutal. We call ourselves good, Marjorie, but we can't silence the primal appeal."

"Mark isn't a caveman."

"But he has that crude fascination. You've felt it. You didn't marry him for his brains. Do you think you're the only one?"

"Mark never looks at a woman."

"They soon learn the art of concealment. Oh, I don't say that there's anything wrong,

as yet; but don't live in a fool's paradise, Marjorie. You must be firm."

"Well, if I couldn't keep my husband without being firm—"

"Sh-h! He's coming back."

The virile, compelling caveman reëntered, his chin washed clean of the guilty stain. He had an unreasonable but firm conviction that he had been badly used. It was silly of them to make so much disturbance over so simple an affair as this dinner in town; but his resentment was tempered by an intuitive certainty that he had something to make up to Marjorie.

"We ought to have Johnny and Blish out to dinner some night," he suggested. "You'd like them, really."

"A press agent for the movies!" said Aunt Cordelia. "Really, Mark, I suppose associates of that sort were all well enough when you were a bachelor in New York; but now that you're married, and living in Wynwood—What is Mr. Zane's business, by the way?"

"Zane? He's a wholesaler."

"Of what?"

O'Rell pulled doggedly at his pipe.

"Ear muffs."

"If you see fit to amuse yourself at my expense," said Aunt Cordelia with dignity, "I suppose you may; but it seems to me that a plain question should receive a plain answer."

"That's a plain answer. If you don't believe me, look in the telephone book."

"But you don't mean to tell me there are still people who wear ear muffs!"

"Aunt Cordelia," said O'Rell, with as much coldness as he ever dared to use toward this formidable personage, "I don't mean to tell you that, because I don't know; but whether they wear them or not, people buy them."

Aunt Cordelia squinted at him over her gold-rimmed nose glasses, but said no more; and they passed out into the living room in an atmosphere of reconciliation. Ear muffs, if not plausible, were at least more respectable than the movies. Marjorie shivered as they entered, and O'Rell threw another log on the fire.

"We'll have to start the furnace again," Marjorie complained, "unless it turns warmer. Father and mother are having a bad week-end for their trip to Atlantic City. Br-r-rh! Your room gets all the east wind, Aunt Cordelia; I'm going to give you the Salem quilt as an extra cover."

"Oh, no," said Aunt Cordelia with a deprecatory smile. "I don't want to deprive you children—"

Marjorie looked guilty.

"We haven't been using it lately," she admitted. "It's—what did we do with it, Mark?"

"With what?" he admitted, with a poor pretense at preoccupation with the evening paper.

"Why, Mark! You know the Salem quilt—the silk one, with the ship in the medallion—"

"You don't mean to tell me you children haven't been using it!" cried Aunt Cordelia. "Why, Marjorie! Young brides are so careless with heirlooms. Your great-grandmother Cothbridge made that quilt with her own hands. Every piece of silk in it was brought from China in the family's ships. It was the Lucia that she embroidered on it—the wonderful ship that held the record for ten years on the Canton run. I'm sure no other family in Wynwood has anything like it!"

"It was too—too valuable to use," Marjorie suggested rather desperately.

"Too valuable! Why, your grandfather and your great-grandfather both died under it. I expected to die under it myself, but when you children were married I thought you'd value it above anything else I could give you!"

"Well, we'll let you have it to-night," said Marjorie. "Where is it, Mark?"

He was silent for a moment, but eventually decided that it was useless to try to hide his past.

"Why," he admitted uneasily, "I lent it to Bill Corliss."

"What?" said Marjorie. "You never told me."

"Bill Corliss!" sputtered Aunt Cordelia. "You lent it! Who in the world is Bill Corliss?"

"One of the people Mark knew before we were married," said Marjorie. "What does he do, Mark? Something pretty wild, isn't it?"

"He's a sporting writer," O'Rell admitted, feeling that the worst might as well be known at once.

"A sporting writer!" said Aunt Cordelia. "And the Salem quilt! Why did you lend it to him, Mark?"

"It wasn't Marjorie's fault," he admitted loyally. "He came out to call on us one evening last winter, when Aunt Ade-

line was sick. Marjorie had gone over to read to her, and I was here alone."

"I remember," Marjorie admitted; "but you didn't tell me you'd lent him the Salem quilt."

"But I didn't know it was the Salem quilt. I didn't know it was any quilt in particular. Oh, yes, I suppose Aunt Cordelia had told me all about it, but I'd forgotten. Corliss had just moved into a new place where the landlord was stingy with bedclothes, and he had to sleep under his overcoat; so, as we had plenty, I told him I'd lend him something till spring."

"I've no doubt your motives were excellent," said Aunt Cordelia. "Marjorie and I have never known anything like that sort of existence, so probably we don't appreciate it; but why should you lend him the Salem quilt, of all things?"

The oppressed soul of Missouri rose in revolt.

"Because," said O'Rell icily, "it was the oldest and ugliest of the lot. I looked them all over, and I told him to keep that one as long as he wanted it."

Aunt Cordelia was silent. Marjorie was silent. O'Rell could feel all the Redmans and all their dead and buried ancestors being silent all around him. He had shot the family albatross.

"And he has it still?" Aunt Cordelia asked presently.

"Unless he's kept up its reputation by dying under it, he has it still."

"Where?"

"Wherever he lives—in some furnished room house."

"You mean to say you don't know where it is?" Marjorie cried, and for her sake he relented.

"I don't know, but I can easily find out. I can reach him at the *Record* office."

"Well, you'd better go in and get it, dear, before something happens to it. If the poor man really needs something to keep him warm, buy him a pair of blankets, but bring the Salem quilt back."

O'Rell knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"All right! I'll get it when I'm in town to-morrow, and bring it back with me after the dinner."

Another silence.

"Of course," Aunt Cordelia explained pacifically, "you can't understand how we who have family traditions feel about things of that sort. The Cothbridges were really one of the first families of Salem, in

the old times. They lost their money later, but all of us cherish this quilt as one of the mementoes that—"

"That we've seen better days," Mark was about to interpolate; but he thought better of it.

"That we value most highly," Aunt Cordelia finished. "I have no doubt, Mark, that it is sometimes hard for you to adjust yourself to our ways. They're probably unlike anything you've known; but you're in the family now."

"True!" he admitted. "You needn't worry; I'll bring back the family treasure. No stranger will be allowed to beat me out of my chance to die under it!"

So it was settled, though this untimely manifestation of Missouri irreverence left some cold chills in the living room. After a while Marjorie was playing the piano, Aunt Cordelia was playing solitaire, and Mark was reading a mathematical quarterly, just as on every other evening that Aunt Cordelia spent with them; but the scars were still unhealed.

When they were getting ready for bed, Marjorie attempted to explain a little further to his untutored understanding.

"It was really my fault, Mark. I ought to have told you how much the family thinks of that quilt; but I never supposed you'd be giving it away to anybody who happened to ask for it."

"I don't give things away to anybody who happens to ask for them," he explained patiently. "I've known Corliss for years, and he always gives back anything he borrows, except money. I'll make him take me around to his room to-morrow and give it to me."

"I won't feel really easy till it's back in the house," Marjorie confessed. "I know it isn't very much to look at, but the family thinks so much of it. I'm glad mamma's at Atlantic City. I wouldn't like her to know we'd let it—"

"Marjorie!" Aunt Cordelia called discreetly from the hallway.

It was a harmless instinct that made Marjorie close the door behind her as she stepped out to confer with a wrapped and cold-creamed Aunt Cordelia on the bathroom threshold.

"Marjorie," said her aunt in a heavy stage whisper, "do you suppose there is such a person as Bill Corliss?"

"Why, of course there is! I've seen him. I saw him at the wedding."



"I've looked in the telephone book," Aunt Cordelia admitted, "and there is a Zane who wholesales ear muffs; but it struck me that there's an air of unreality about all this. Getting the quilt gave him just the excuse he needed for going in town to-morrow. Your uncle's excuses were always ingenious."

"Well," Marjorie held out stoutly, "the quilt's gone, and there is a Bill Corliss, and goodness knows Mark isn't ingenious."

Aunt Cordelia shook a curl-papered head.

"You never know your husband," she declared, "till it's too late. Remember the old saying, dear—'If age but could; if youth but knew!'"

"Could what?"

"Could do it over again," Aunt Cordelia sighed. "If I had another chance, my husband would never go in town of evenings to be lured away from me by one of these vampire women. Somehow I feel, Marjorie, that in your married life I'm living my own over; and thank Heaven, now I understand the polygamous instincts of strong men!"

Marjorie smiled through a yawn.

"Mark would be a pretty poor Turk."

Again Aunt Cordelia shook her head.

"Well, you can't say I haven't warned you!"

#### IV

In consideration of the irregular habits contracted when he worked on a newspaper, O'Rell was allowed to sleep late on Saturday mornings. True, "late" meant only nine o'clock. The unavoidably early hours of the rest of the week had given him a habit of waking at seven; but since Marjorie, who hated irregularity, got up at seven every day, he enjoyed once a week a period of solitude, which he believed he devoted to thought.

Sometimes, even in a warm bed on a cold morning, with no need to get up, he really did think. This was one of the times. He thought about Zane and Blish, and the period which somehow insisted on calling itself the good old days.

An honest recollection compelled him to admit that they hadn't seemed so very good at the time. In the good old days he had thought he would be perfectly happy with a day job, and a stucco house in a pleasant suburb, and a beautiful wife; but he hadn't foreseen the Wynwood Country Club, and Aunt Cordelia. In the good old

days there was a care-free gayety of spirit, in himself and in his associates; nobody would have thought of worrying about a crazy quilt.

He would bring the miserable old thing back, of course, for at the end of May Corliss could need it no longer; but he felt an obscure satisfaction in having shown his contempt for it last night. The Redmans had treated him wonderfully well, but they must learn that they didn't own him, body and soul. He would make it quite clear that he retained the privilege of going into town by himself, and of despising the family treasures.

Yet he couldn't get rid of the conviction that he owed amends to Marjorie. She couldn't help being a Redman, with her share of the family superstitions; and he was going to leave her alone on an evening when she had expected to enjoy herself at Zella's.

When she came in promptly at nine o'clock, fresh and smiling in a pink morning gown, with a cup of perfect coffee and a tray of incredibly fluffy rolls, he sat up and kissed her with mingled affection and compunction.

"You're an angel, Marge, and I've spoiled your evening; but I won't spoil your whole day. Suppose you go in with me, and we'll have lunch somewhere and see a matinée?"

He had the feeling that this was really rather magnanimous, and that she ought to appreciate it; but her answer chilled his good intentions.

"Then I should have to come home by myself."

Of course there was no reason why she couldn't come home by herself. She did it every time she went shopping in town. Mark wondered if it was unfounded suspicion to see in this a covert attack on his plan of staying in for the dinner. By this time the dinner had become a symbol of all that men had fought for at Marathon and at Bunker Hill. He wasn't going to be cheated out of it!

"You could go to another play in the evening," he suggested, "and wait for me at the tube station."

"Too much bother," she said lightly. "Besides, Laurette called up while you were asleep, and I told her I'd play tennis with her this afternoon. Zella called up, too." She looked at him speculatively. "She said there was another man coming

in for her party—some friend of Howard's, from Boston, coming out to spend the weekend with them. She wanted to know where she could get a girl for him, so I told her I was it."

O'Rell's face lighted up.

"That's fine!" he remarked heartily.

"Fine! Your evening won't be spoiled, after all."

"It certainly won't," Marjorie assented, with some emphasis. "So if you want to see a *matinée*, run along by yourself."

The prospect of a whole day on Manhattan Island, by himself, with no reminders of New Jersey's garden suburb, was so sudden and startling that Mark wasted no speculation on Marjorie's motives. Nobody's day would be spoiled. He had satisfied his conscience, and she would enjoy herself more with her friends in Wynwood than with him in New York. She felt that way about Wynwood. And as for him—

"Saturday used to be my day off," he mused; "and Corliss's, too. I wonder if it is still! We generally spent it together, back in the old times."

"What do newspaper men do on their day off?"

"Oh, one thing and another."

"For instance?" she asked, with a trace of insistence.

"Well, Bill and I generally slept till noon, to begin with. Then we'd have breakfast at Jack's, and go to a ball game, and sit in at a little quarter-limit in the evening. Other days we'd see a *matinée*, and then call up a couple of girls and take them to dinner, where we could dance; and so on, till we turned up once more at Jack's for breakfast."

"And those were what you call the good old days?"

"I don't," he sputtered hastily.

Marjorie seemed unconvinced.

"What kind of girls?" she asked.

"Oh, college graduates with jobs down town—poetesses from the village—actresses out of a job—Corliss knew a lot of them. Why—you don't—good Heavens, Marge, you know I never went in for anything lax and riotous! Look at me! Don't I look like a—resident of Wynwood? Look at me!"

He was sure that anybody who looked at him could look straight through his simple and stainless soul. His wife looked at him, silently, as she played with the dull silver on her dressing table. Yes, he was

handsome. Even in his pyjamas, still unshaven, he was handsome—compelling. Of course women had pursued him, Marjorie concluded—had pursued him and would pursue him. Who wouldn't? She would have pursued him when they first met, if he hadn't beaten her to it!

O'Rell couldn't quite understand her. She seemed cold, and coldness wasn't one of her traits. Certainly, he thought, she could hardly see much wickedness in his reminiscences. They played a good deal harder than quarter-limit at the Wynwood Country Club. Marjorie still liked a cocktail when they dined with her father, or some other prudent person who had a cellar; yet there was a chill in the air.

However, the chill gradually vanished, and Marjorie came back to the bedside as he finished his coffee and lit a cigarette.

"If you're going in early," she suggested, "you might do an errand for me. I need a new lip stick. You'd better get it at Herrick's. Take this one in, so you'll know which kind to get."

Mark clung to her hand as she laid the lip stick in his. Marjorie's hands were her specialty—pink and slender and strong, with nails which, by unwearied care, had been kept free from the marks of housework. He raised her hand to his lips. She drew away after a moment, smiling.

"Silly! This isn't a honeymoon. Mind you don't lose it, now!"

Then her glance traveled from the hand that held the lip stick to his chin. It stayed there, and he saw the change in her expression. He needed no glass to tell him what she saw on his chin—the red smudge which might have been a mosquito bite, or an accident of shaving; but which in this case, visibly, wasn't either. He wondered if Marjorie could read his thoughts as he read hers. He wondered if he dared to tell her about Irene.

But it was so absurd! Too absurd, he decided after a moment; too absurd for any wife to believe. He could hardly believe it himself. If a year of blameless married life hadn't established his reputation for integrity, he couldn't win her confidence by telling her a story like that.

"Trust thyself," Emerson had said; and perhaps he would have added, "Trust thy wife, but only within reason." If you confess anything to your wife, O'Rell concluded, it must be something that she can believe.

So he said nothing, and Marjorie said nothing. She potted about her dressing table while he finished his cigarette, and then she turned to him with a face that seemed empty of suspicion.

"If you're ready to get up, I'd like to make the bed. I suppose you want to go in on the eleven twenty-three. Only if you meet any of the people you used to know before we were married, please don't play cards—will you?"

He thought he was buying his way out very cheaply. The red smudge was stealthily removed, as the other had been, and Marjorie had apparently no afterthoughts when she kissed him good-by.

He was rather proud of the cool, comradely manner of their parting. Marjorie was always calm; and since Mark was an unobservant young man, he might have seen nothing unusual in her snapping eyes and her glowing cheeks as she went about her housework after his departure. People who knew Marjorie better than her husband might have thought that something was likely to happen.

However, she was still calm when she appeared in a trim rose sweater and a sport skirt, after lunch, and rode in Laurette's car to the country club. People who saw her on the tennis courts thought only that she was rather more vivacious than usual.

There were remarks, of course, on her husband's absence. It was the first time Wynwood had ever seen her alone on Saturday afternoon; but the fraternity dinner in town seemed a satisfactory explanation. Marjorie was surprised that everybody else took it as a matter of course; but then she and Mark had been an exceptional couple, notorious for their felicity. Marjorie knew that—as she knew that certain cynics had wondered how long it would last.

She was gayer than ever when Zella Burbidge met her on the club veranda at tea.

"Well, Marjorie, how do you like being a week-end widow? You'll get used to it, you know!"

"Oh, Mark's coming back to-night," said Marjorie lightly.

"What a shame!"

"Now, Zella!"

"Oh, I don't mean anything horrid," said Zella; "only that Howard thought it was so warm that we might pack up the whole party and drive out to the lake to-night. Our camp's just been put in order, and we could have a swim to-morrow; but

if you have to go back for Mark—well, anyway, can you come in to dinner? Howard and Hollingsworth ought to be in on the next train, and I want somebody to keep him amused while I get ready for the party."

"Hollingsworth?"

"Howard's friend, from Boston. My dear, I think you'll like him. Howard thinks he's the greatest ever—they were classmates at Dartmouth. I'm a little afraid of him myself. He's so dignified; but then I suppose you're used to that, with that woof-woof husband of yours!"

"Mark's not so dignified; but I'll come to dinner, anyway."

The Lindners enticed Marjorie into some mixed doubles just after that, so she was out on the courts when Zella's husband and his guest arrived. She saw them out of the corner of her eye—saw them, and noted that Hollingsworth really was a rather impressive person, large and handsome, in rough tweeds—attractive, almost compelling. He looked, indeed, something like Mark. Her eyes snapped a little more snappily.

Consequently, it happened that Hollingsworth, on the club veranda, hastily called Zella's attention away from the desultory conversation which they were carrying on with Howard and one or two other men.

"I say, Mrs. Burbidge, who's that stunning girl just coming off the tennis courts—the one with the rose sweater—headed this way? She's a dream!"

Zella looked at him aslant, with a suggestion of a smile.

"A very much married dream, my friend!"

Then, as his face fell: "But her husband's in town, and she's your girl for this evening."

Hollingsworth drew a long breath.

"I knew," he declared, "that this was going to be a real party!"

Marjorie's husband, meanwhile, was gayly voyaging back to the good old times. When a pilgrim is in search of his lost youth, almost anything may happen; so O'Rell had drawn thirty dollars from the bank, though careful calculation led him to suppose that he was quite unlikely to spend more than seven and a half. It was well to be prepared for emergencies.

Cousin Felix, in the bank, had beamed on him, and had dropped a remark which made it clear that he thought Mark and



Marjorie were going into town for their monthly orgy. O'Rell saw no reason to enlighten him. He didn't know that Cousin Felix was going to see Marjorie at the country club later in the day; nor, if he had known, would he have cared. He was going back to the good old days, and for twelve hours he was going to make it his business to forget Wynwood.

He climbed into the smoker of the eleven twenty-three, pausing to exchange salutations with Gabriel Gooch, the town marshal, who was patrolling the station platform. Wynwood was a well guarded town, and strangers who got off the trains there, unless accompanied by natives, were always more or less under suspicion. There was, however, no reason to suppose that suspicion attached to residents leaving town; so O'Rell settled down in the smoker with a light heart.

It grew still lighter as the train rolled on toward the sky line of New York, leaving Wynwood behind—Wynwood, and the billboard which showed to the outward bound wayfarer the legend, "Au Revoir—Wynwood Development Company," and greeted the home-coming business man with "Welcome to Wynwood, the Commuter's Eden." O'Rell was running away from school, playing hooky; and he liked it.

An hour later he stood on the threshold of the good old times and the *Morning Record* city room; for his first duty was to find Corliss. He could square himself with Wynwood and the family by making sure of bringing back that quilt.

An office boy who knew not Joseph obstructed him with a "Who d' ye want to see?" but O'Rell pushed him aside, and strode into a room altered beyond recognition, and occupied by a number of total strangers.

After the first shock, he realized that he might have expected it. Since he went away to war he had been in that room only once. On the day when he and Marjorie came into town to buy the ring, he had dropped in at the office to display his beautiful fiancée and to tell his old boss about his better job. Even that visit was a year ago; but it was disturbing to find the change so complete.

However, Frank Goldberg was still assistant city editor, still cooped in behind the same old railing, with his feet on one desk and his shoulders braced against another, and his ear adjacent to a telephone

that could be answered with the minimum of effort. He greeted O'Rell with a calmness not at all suited to the magnitude of the occasion.

"Where are the old familiar faces?" the pilgrim asked.

"You're one of 'em," said Goldberg. "And you're not the only one that's walked out of the office into a better job, nor the only one that's come back to ask for the old job once more!"

"I don't want a job," said O'Rell. "I've got a better job than you ever dreamed of. I came back to—oh, well, never mind that! I came to see, among other things, if you could tell me where to get a drink."

"I could, before the police got busy and began to dry up the town; but Cassidy's been pinched, and he's getting careful. Still, if you go down and tell him I sent you, you might get something. If the bottle he's got in the safe is the same one that was there this morning, you'll live through it; but Cassidy would just as soon sell you nitric acid, if he ran out of rye. Times have changed, Mark!"

"Looks as if," said the gentleman from Wynwood gloomily. "Everybody but you—you're still the same."

"Yesterday, to-day, and it begins to look like forever," Goldberg admitted. "Still waiting for the boss to die, and he never will."

O'Rell moved over to the window, and looked glumly down the side street to the torrent of Broadway traffic pouring past the corner. His day had begun wrong. Whatever might come now, the edge had been taken off.

It wasn't Goldberg's indifference, or his evident conviction that O'Rell no longer belonged. Something had happened. It was the same old town, the same old streets; but something was lacking. The color had been washed out; the universe was gray. If Marjorie had only come in with him the universe would be bright enough; but Marjorie was back home in the commuter's Eden.

"Times have changed," he admitted with a sigh. "Is Corliss still working here, and is this still his day off?"

"He is, and it is; but he's just starting up to New London to cover the boat race. He's around somewhere drawing expense money, if you want to see him."

O'Rell moved away slowly. His home-coming to the dear, dead past was becom-



ing a failure, and growing flatter every moment. Corliss was going away; Johnny Zane would be busy with the dinner arrangements; he would have to spend the afternoon alone.

"I suppose there's no use in asking you to come down to Cassidy's with me?" he ventured.

"Not till the boss gets back from lunch. There's always the hope that he may have been run over by a taxicab and got me a well-earned promotion; but every day he comes back safe and sound. I'm a savage man, Mark, when I'm disappointed."

There seemed to be nothing more to say to Goldberg. Mark had the luck to find Corliss at the cashier's window; but after hurried and hearteningly enthusiastic greetings, Corliss looked at his watch and said he would have to catch his train.

O'Rell explained his quest, not without some misgivings. The more he thought of the Salem quilt, the less likely it seemed that anybody would want to get it back. Corliss evidently thought so, too.

"What—that old rag? Why, yes, I suppose it's around somewhere. I live in Mother McCurdy's place, over on Forty-Fifth. You know it—home for aged and indigent chorus girls, race-track gamblers down on their luck, and all-too-honest newspaper men. It's somewhere around the place."

"Is there any way I could get it? The damned thing seems to be quite a family treasure, I find."

"I'll give you my key," said Corliss. "It opens the street door and my room, both. Come to think of it, when it turned warm last month I carted that quilt out. My room's only big enough for me and my books, you know. There's a big white wardrobe out in the corridor, just outside my door. Seems to me I chucked the thing up on one of the top shelves, to get it out of the way. Likely it's there still, unless somebody else has borrowed it. We all practice communism, more or less, at Mother McCurdy's."

"Any deaths in the house lately?" asked O'Rell.

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"Then nobody's borrowed the quilt," said Mark. "It seems to be something of a hoodoo. People die under it."

"I didn't die under it," said Corliss; "and if it kills off any of my neighbors, civilization will survive. They're a hard

lot in that old dump. Here—take the key. I've got to get started for New London. Thanks for the quilt, though it hasn't much warmth in it. Sorry I didn't know its reputation. I might have had it framed."

O'Rell was left alone—painfully alone. He wandered aimlessly into the corridor and pushed his way into an overcrowded elevator. What was to be done?

Just then, from the remotest corner, over the shoulders of fat, fragrant ladies and respectable, bearded gentlemen, came a joyful hail:

"Old Marky O'Rell! Why, this is like the good old times!"

## V

O'RELL peered over the assorted shoulders and down on the little man squeezed into the corner. Yes, it was Byron Blish. His shiny hair was a little sparser, perhaps, and his paunch was a little rounder; but otherwise he was as O'Rell had always known him, with the same eager little black eyes peering out through his gold-rimmed nose glasses, in perennial confidence that the world would be found worth looking at.

The elevator flung them out, and they drew away from the crowd and clasped hands.

"Same old Byron!" said O'Rell.

"You don't look a day older, kid! How's everything? Coming to the dinner? Of course! Johnny said the old quartet would pull some more close harmonies. Well, how's life?"

O'Rell frowned.

"Something's happened," he said; "to life, or to this town—I don't know which. This is the first time I've been in by myself in a long, long while; and it's not what it used to be. It looks like—oh, like a Maxfield Parrish picture with all the color out. I don't know if you understand."

"Do I understand? I got you in a minute. I know what it looks like, and I know why it looks that way. Now, leave it to Byron. My real name is Big Chief Knows Where to Get It. Are you on? Then come along!"

They went around the corner and into an institution with fly netting over the mirror, where three or four listless persons were drinking sarsaparilla, their homesick feet planted on the brass rail. Blish led O'Rell down to the farther end of the room, where a keg on the bar cut off the view from the street.

"Psst! George! Two!"

O'Rell found his hand clasping a glass with a tablespoonful of something red in it.

"The taste seems familiar," he admitted, licking his lips; "but there was so little of it, I can't be sure. Let's have another!"

They had another, and Blish suggested that they might make it three. O'Rell drew a long breath, stretched himself, and grinned.

"Better, hey?" Blish laughed. "'She starts, she moves, she seems to feel a thrill of life along her keel.' That puts the pink back in the landscape, eh? Leave it to Byron!"

"I know it is a sin," said O'Rell. "You know, I've turned respectable, Byron. I teach school in a small town. I suppose, if my board of education saw me in here, I'd lose my job; but—"

"But they won't see you," Blish finished for him, offering a cigarette case. "Believe me, this is luck, running into you like that! Just dropped into the *Record* office to leave some stuff about our new spectacle. I'm with Supernal Pictures now, you know—head of publicity. Say, boy, that's the life, if you like to be where the money is! Say, I got your wedding announcement. Best of luck, old top! It's the life, ain't it?"

"What? You, too?"

"Surest thing you know! Wedded a dashing daughter of California, nearly three years ago. Is it the life? Oh, boy! Any little strangers yet? No? Neither have I. Psst! George! Two more of the same!"

O'Rell began to feel a positively loathsome prudence.

"I—I think I'll have a cigar, Byron. I don't see very much of this stuff now, and somehow it seems to work quicker than it used to. Besides, in my business, you know—"

"You a school-teacher! Ha, ha, ha! Johnny said you live in Jersey, too. That so? Golly, Mark, you need another! You need all you can get. No? Ask me—I know. I'm a commuter myself. Live at Oceanmere, down on Long Island. Rotten dump, if you ask me—lot of expensive bungalows on a sand flat; but it's only a couple of miles from the Mallard Club—all kinds of sports, water and indoor; and then June would have it. June? No, not the merry month—the merry lady—my better half. Say, you've got to meet her, Marky; she's the princess of all good sports."

"Does she act?"

"Not the way you mean. No, Marky, she never worked for a living in her lovely little life. She's just a sweet little home body, and we live like two loving birds. The life, eh? Tell me about your wife. Jersey girl? Well, they grow some good ones. You must bring her down to see us some week-end. Say, come down with me to-night. June's heard a lot about you, and she'll want to see if it's true."

"I can't do it," O'Rell muttered.

With the new influences brightening up his day, he rather regretted that he couldn't. It would be interesting to see Blish in the domestic circle. However, he couldn't do it to-night. He knew what Marjorie would say if he telephoned.

Blish was watching him keenly, amused but sympathetic.

"Keeps a pretty tight rein on you, eh? Well, I don't blame her. You always kept off the grass, Marky, but I used to think that if you once got started, you certainly would tear up that greensward. I'm lucky. June's a good sport, and I know how to kid her along. All in the girl, you know; some of 'em expect too much. Well, what do we do next—get some lunch? Anything on for this afternoon?"

"I thought I'd see a show."

Blish grasped his hand again.

"Two hearts that beat as one, kid! I've got two seats right in my pocket for 'So This Is Paris.' It's a beaner—opened Tuesday night, and good for a year. Are we on? We are! Then let's chow."

Gray curtains of cloud still hid the sun when they went out into the street, but somehow the day was brighter.

A quarter of an hour ago the tall buildings had been nothing but tall buildings; but O'Rell looked at them now and saw them as he had seen them when he first came to town from Missouri—as he saw them every day from the distant heights of Wynwood. They were cloud-capped minarets of a palace of romance, turrets of a dream city where anything might happen. The people whom he brushed aside as he strode down Broadway were pleasant people, with kindly faces. The good old days had come back!

"For the love of Pete, slow down!" Blish panted presently. "This is no Marathon. The food will wait."

"Everything will wait for us to-day," said O'Rell with a new and lively assurance.

"I feel young again—for the first time since the war began."

"Call it war, if you want to," Blish muttered. "I know how you feel!"

He didn't expound this cryptic remark, and no more was said till they were attacking mutton chops at Browne's.

"I always love Saturday," Blish observed. "Best day there is. Sunday you don't have to work, but you can't forget you'll have to get up and work on Monday. On Saturday you start out working, like any other day, and first thing you know here's noon and you're off for the weekend. I've never got over that sensation of pleasant surprise. Oh, boy! Tell me this don't beat the old job! Well, how do you like teaching school? I'd never have picked you for a pedagogue."

"It's a day job," said O'Rell cautiously. "Being married, I like that."

"Here, too, kid! But say, it took me a long time to get used to the hours. After seven years of 1 P.M. to 2 A.M. on the old *Record*, it didn't seem right to get up with the sun. I used to do my best. I'd go to bed at ten o'clock like a good little boy; and then I used to wake up at three in the morning, ready for a pleasant day, and nothing to do but watch for burglars. Ah, Marky, those were the good old days!"

Here was an understanding heart, and O'Rell felt an impelling need to pour out his soul.

"You can't even watch for burglars in Wynwood," he groaned. The town's too cautious; they won't let suspicious strangers get off the trains. The fact is, Byron, I wasn't meant to live in Jersey. It goes hard. Marjorie's always lived there. She likes it, and she's the most wonderful girl in the world; but she lives in Jersey. Byron, she has more relatives than the children of Brigham Young, and they're always around. It's—oh, well!"

The pedagogical conscience, drugged but not silenced, suggested that this line of conversation had been carried about as far as was advisable. Blish gave a comprehending nod.

"I get you, kid—I get you! Now I will say this for Oceanmere—a lot of live ones live there. Burglars—no, we've never had 'em; but say, kid, I've got something to worry about."

"Your wife, or your cellar?"

"Not the cellar—the attic. We bought our bungalow already built, but I'm a

pretty fair carpenter, and with my own lily-white hands, Marky, I put in a false ceiling where it would do most good. Right beside my bedroom door, Marky, there's a secret panel; and behind it I've stored twelve—count 'em—twelve casks of good blood-red California port, where no burglar would ever find 'em. June helped me to put 'em away; she's a good sport. Come what may, crime waves and all, we can still drive dull care away. Better come down with me to-night, what? There's a big water carnival down at the Mallard Club to-morrow, just down the shore from our happy home. I've promised to take June—she's a bit of a fancy diver herself. If you'll just come down with me and call up your wife in the morning—"

"She has two or three engagements for to-morrow," said O'Rell.

"Can't you come without her?"

"Oh, I have them, too. Besides, I don't like to leave her. She's a peach!"

"I believe that, Marky. You always had an eye; but you'd better come down and see our little love nest. I'll square it with your wife. Leave it to Byron. I'm the greatest little fixer you ever saw!"

O'Rell silently devoted his attention to coffee and a cigar. Blish had never tried to fix anything in Wynwood.

"One thing I've got to do," he said presently. "Bill Corliss borrowed a quilt from our household last winter—yes, a quilt; and I've got to go around to his room and get it back. It's an heirloom. Shall we have time, before the show? It's just around in Forty-Fifth Street."

"I suppose we'd have time," Blish admitted with lifted eyebrows, "but why get it now? The day is before us. From all I hear about this show, the temperature is so high that you won't need a quilt. Get it afterward."

"I suppose we'll have time before the dinner," O'Rell admitted. "The cards said seven, but that means eight."

"Not now, boy—not now. It meant eight when everybody hung around the bar downstairs, to get fortified against the oratory; but not now. People who go to a dinner in these times want to get there quick and get it over. Still, seven will leave us two hours after the show. What do you say we go over to the club and tempt the goddess of fortune for a while? There's always a little game there on Saturday afternoon."



O'Rell frowned. Temptation was following temptation.

"I can't afford it."

"What? With your luck? Say, you never failed to fill a hand in your life."

"But I'm a school-teacher now, and I have to be good, even when I go to town. I've cut out poker."

Blish nodded.

"I get you once more. Well, look here now—if you've promised the little lady not to play cards on your day off, I'll bet she never thought to ask you not to roll the bones. Did she, now? Aha! We'll stop by at the office, right now, and I'll get a little flask that I keep in my desk for emergencies; and then we can face Dame Fortune with a steely eye. What, kid? Come in town for a day off, and spend the afternoon counting your toes? It can't be done—not while Byron's with you!"

"You're a great little reasoner," O'Rell laughed; "but—"

"Never mind the buts. Look here, Marky—I've been married three years to your one, so take a little advice from an old-timer. You don't know how to play this game just yet. Watch me—that's all I ask. Just that little bit of fraternal advice—watch Byron. June had some notions, too, when we were first married; but a little diplomacy fixed them. Trouble with you is, you never learned how to edge a bit on the strict and unvarnished truth. Me, I'm truthful; but I paint it up and make it look nice. I'd rather tell my wife a little prevarication, now and then, than hurt her feelings. So would you, if you thought it over. It ain't fair to a woman to crush her with the brutal truth. They like to be kidded; so I hand June a few petty inaccuracies from time to time, and say, she eats out of my hand. You ought to see us. It would give you some pointers. Can't you come down to-night, and square yourself by phone? Well, think it over."

"Byron, you're a devil, but you never lived in Jersey. Forget this impossible excursion, and get started toward the show."

"Whatever you say, kid; but we'll just run up to the office on the way, and get that flask. A little snifter would do us no harm, eh? Leave it to Byron!"

## VI

BYRON couldn't make O'Rell think very highly of "So This Is Paris." He had seen worse musical comedies, and had laughed

at them; but he was still in the spirit of the pilgrim. There had been a time, he remembered, when all melodies were catchy, all soubrettes fascinating, all comedians comic; but some phases of one's lost youth seemed to be lost forever. "So This Is Paris" had to be considered strictly on its merits.

Yet Blish seemed to be enjoying it—a gift, O'Rell decided, and a pleasant one. Blish had never lost the spirit of the good old days. Mark began to wonder if he himself could ever really get it back—if the first surge of hilarity, which was already beginning to die down, hadn't been the last kick of his waning youth. Perhaps he belonged in Wynwood.

"How do you do it, Byron?" he asked in an intermission. "It looks pretty sad to me."

"Ah, my boy, that's the misfortune of living in Jersey. Me, I see about everything there is—which means that I see many that are worse than this. Endure it patiently, and be thankful for the goods the gods give."

"They didn't give this show much," O'Rell mumbled; "not even a girl worth looking at, except that tall blonde—what's her name?—the countess."

"Oh, sure—Lorna Lockwood. Say, she's a beaner, Marky! I know her. She does some bits in our pictures now and then. Reminds me—I want to see her. I have a hunch Haeffler could use her in his next. What do you say we go back and see her after the next act?"

"I say we do," O'Rell grinned.

This was romance—to call on a beautiful actress in her dressing room. What would Wynwood say to that? He began to feel distinctly like a man about town.

Yet this adventure, so glamorous to a Jersey high school principal, was a part of Blish's daily routine—so much a part of his routine, in fact, that when the second act ended he had forgotten all about it, and insisted on going down to the lounge for a cigarette.

O'Rell reminded his friend, though rather timidly. He was ashamed of his rustic excitement over the lure of the stage.

"Forgot Lorna," Blish admitted. "Sure, we'll go to see her, after it's over. Great kid, Lorna, though she's going back. Never could act, never could sing much. Got pneumonia, or something, and lost her voice."



"So did the rest of the cast," said O'Rell morosely. "All credit to Lorna for admitting it."

"Now, don't be a hearse. There goes the bell."

The knowledge that he was going behind the scenes to call on this radiant creature gave O'Rell a sort of feeling of proprietorship. He followed her statuesque blondness about the stage with a curiosity, and listened to her few insignificant lines with an intensity, that resembled the emotions of the old days. He was waking up again.

When the last act ended, and Blish was stopped in the aisle by an acquaintance who drew him aside for a whispered talk, O'Rell began to be desperately afraid that they would miss her. Blish broke away at last, and led him through tortuous passages to a bare, chilly region where stage hands were rolling scenery about to the grave peril of bystanders. Here they met her, dressed for the street in a thin white frock, with her pale golden hair shining through the transparencies of a wide white hat. Her black eyebrows rose as she saw them.

"Well, Byron Blish!"

"None other," he responded, bowing over her outstretched hand. "Lorna, my dear, let me present my old and bosom friend, Mark O'Rell—Captain O'Rell—Professor O'Rell—O'Rell, D. S. C.—oh, he's got a yard of titles. You'd never dream that he used to read copy on the *Record*."

"So pleased," she said crisply. "Ouch, Byron! Let go of my fingers. What do you think of the show?"

"Great, my dear, great! It ought to run forever."

"So they say, and may they be right! The last three masterpieces that have commanded my services lasted five nights each. Believe me, Byron, the lean years have been pretty bony."

"You wouldn't care to see Haeffler, I suppose, and take a little genteel employment of mornings?"

"Say! Wouldn't I? Byron, there's nothing I love better than patting a nice handful of money. I've been broke often enough. Eventually one wearies of it. I'll look in on Haeffler Monday morning."

"We thank you," Blish grinned.

"Nothing big, I'm afraid."

She shook her head.

"Never mind that. I've lost my thirst

for fame. I'll be happy if I can save enough to buy me a place in the old ladies' home."

The suggested contrast with her present splendor set them both off in laughter.

"Never was so serious in my life," she averred. "Time passes, and age waves his withering hand. You'd never dream I was in 'Florodora,' would you? Not the revival a couple of years ago—the real thing."

"What?" they cried, and she dropped a mocking curtsy.

"Thanks, gents, for those golden thoughts! I know I don't look it. It takes two hours' work a day not to look it. No, Byron, you needn't count up on your fingers. You'd need them all, and your toes besides. Twenty years, and then a little more; but they caught me young. I thought 'Florodora' was the greatest show on earth, and I was the world's greatest chorus-girl-about-to-become-a-real-star. Oh, well, we all kid ourselves! Say, what are we standing here for, in the draft? I'm freezing to death. I put on this georgette dress this morning to greet one lonely sunbeam, and scared it right back into the clouds?"

"I've got something on the hip," Blish offered.

"No, thanks! Anyway, you'd better save it. You'll need it to-night."

"To-night?"

"Sure—the Palette. Don't tell me you're not going!"

Blish clasped her hands solemnly.

"Lorna, I thank you. Would you believe that I'd forgotten all about it? Mr. O'Rell and I, Lorna, belonged to the same dear old college frat; and to-night we're going to a very, very dull dinner of our alumni club, where my sky tenor and his bull bass will entertain. I had that weight on my mind so heavily that I forgot all about—Mark, the Palette Club's masquerade costume ball takes place this night. The fun will be fast and furious just about the time we can break away from the dinner. Shall we duck the last speech and go frisk with the frisky? I ask you, shall we? Oh, boy! Are we there?"

"I'm not," said O'Rell decisively. "My employer is going to speak at the dinner, and I've got to be in sight, listening to his words of wisdom. Besides—"

Blish seemed about to shed tears.

"Besides! Hear him! But the man has an alibi, Lorna; he lives in Jersey. Be-

sides, as he was about to say, he's got to make the eleven fifty-four on the Erie, or the twelve three on the Lackawanna, as the case may be. This is his annual night off. His wife has slipped the chain off his collar and told him to take a run around the block; and he won't go to the Palette masquerade. Yet he was human, once. Well, Marky, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll call up our beautiful wives, and bid them make a costume out of the window curtains and leave their suburban solitudes. We'll have them stop in at Dondin's and take us to the Palette—eh, Marky? June won first prize in a *Salome* costume at Los Angeles last year. None of the million-dollar queens of the film could touch her. Will we knock 'em dead with our suburban beauties? Will we? Say!"

"I won't," said O'Rell gloomily. "Marjorie has a date to-night."

"But she'd break it, for this—"

"No, she wouldn't. You—oh, you don't understand!"

Lorna Lockwood was looking at him with eyes that laughed under the black brows. Mark was afraid she understood only too well.

At that moment an emissary from the stage door came up and drew her aside. There was a whispered conference.

"Sorry to leave you, boys," said Lorna, "but I hear a lady's waiting for me—a lady—and she won't be put off. It was not ever thus. See you at the Palette, Byron. Sorry you commute, Mr. O'Rell."

"Great kid, Lorna!" Blish declared, as they passed out into Broadway. "I knew she was no kitten, but 'Florodora'—blooie! And yet they say time will tell. Speaking of time, Marky, the sands are running fast, and every minute brings you nearer that owl train back to Jersey. Two hours left before dinner. Let's go round to the club and try our luck."

O'Rell said nothing, but walked on where Blish led. He had no business to do it, but he did like to watch them roll. He used to be lucky at games of chance, but he had never exercised his luck in Wynwood. Bridge for modest prizes was the limit of debauchery permitted to a high school principal.

What a colorful life Blish led! Music and soft lights, flasks on the hip, interviews back stage with dashing actresses, masquerades at the Palette Club! His wife's rela-

tives, if she had any, were three thousand miles away.

Was he, Mark O'Rell, a swine, to turn up his nose at the proffered pearls of the gay life? Should he decline his one and only chance to do what he wanted? Suddenly it seemed to him the hand of fate that had driven him to draw thirty dollars from the bank that morning, when he expected to spend only seven and a half.

"I'm with you, Byron," he said suddenly. "To the modest but inevitable limit of twenty-two dollars, I'm with you. Here's Forty-Fifth Street—let's stop off and get that quilt."

"Oh, for the love of Pete! Quilt on the brain! You've got Bill's key, haven't you? Get the quilt any time—after the dinner, if you like—but don't take it over to the club. I don't want to be kidded about my sleepy friend who carries his bedding with him."

O'Rell looked at the slip Corliss had given him, with the address.

"All right! That's the house, across the street. I can find it afterward, I guess."

It was an old four-story brownstone, with a bakery and lunch room on the ground floor. Beside the narrow flight of steps that ran up to the stoop jutted out a front of plate glass windows, with a gilt sign:

MME. COSETTE MANDELBAUM  
CLEANING AND DYEING

"Corliss doesn't live in much style," O'Rell commented; "but I remember that he said it was a theatrical rooming house."

"I know it," said Blish. "It's called Mother McCurdy's. Half the unemployed hams in the world are living there on their expectations."

"My key opens the street door," said O'Rell. "I'll pick up the quilt on the way home."

"My boy," said Blish solemnly, "if you say the word 'home' again I'll bean you! This is your day off. Now come along and gather rosebuds while you may."

Lorna Lockwood had passed out of the stage door into the brick-walled alley, where a girl whom she had never seen was keeping a determined vigil, with an old straw suit case on the pavement beside her.

"Miss Lockwood? Guess you don't know me, do you? I'm your cousin Irene, from Wynwood, New Jersey."

(To be continued in the November number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

# The Lesson of the Sea

THE EVENTFUL CRUISE OF THE YACHT PIONEER IN STORMY WATERS

By Ralph Stock

"IT'S Herriott!" exclaimed some one with binoculars to his eyes.

"Of course it is," was the prompt rejoinder. "Herriott doesn't let others see to that sort of thing—in a race. She's pitching, too, by the look of it."

The wide terrace and green lawns of the yacht club were thronged with a well dressed, undemonstrative multitude, and every eye was on Stella, the leader in the race for the challenge cup. Something was amiss with her gaff topsail. It fluttered impotently, while every other sail strained and belled to a stiff northeaster.

Then a pygmy figure was seen to creep forward to the mast, up it by the hoops to the hounds, and still up and outward along the gaff. Twice it paused, clinging-like a fly to the jolting, swaying spar as the yacht buried her aquiline nose in the muss of a lumpy sea. It reached the peak, a glinting white speck against the intense blue background of the sky. There was a brief struggle that could be better imagined than seen by the spectators, and the topsail was sheeted home, true and clean as a piece of cardboard.

A murmur of discreet applause went up from the club grounds. In gybing at the last mark, Stella's jackyard had fouled the peak halyards, and Herriott had cleared it. The race was his.

Indeed, it would be difficult to mention anything of importance that was not Jack Herriott's. He possessed abounding health, sufficient means, and a charming wife, not to mention a seeming inability to do anything otherwise than brilliantly.

A blond and smiling giant, picturesquely disheveled, he came ashore in one of the launches, to be surrounded by members and friends. They congratulated him on winning the cup, but no mention was made of

his feat in clearing the jackyard under sail. That was no more than a piece of ordinary good seamanship that would be expected from a man like Herriott, and he knew his kind far too well to refer to it himself.

Behind him, and in almost glaring contrast as they threaded their way up the lawn, limped Tony Landon, Herriott's mate on Stella, and his oldest friend. Physically, Landon was sufficiently unattractive to be remarkable rather than insignificant, and the wound in his foot, received in France, had not added to his charm. Also, a certain *gaucherie* made him anything but a social ornament; but in his good-natured, open-hearted way Herriott had clung to his old friend, even after marriage—which was admitted to be a trifle unusual.

Stella Herriott met her husband on the terrace, smiled her congratulations, and allowed him to pass on into the club. There he sprawled at length in a deep leather chair and listened to divergent views on the race with a sufficient showing of boredom.

"Splendid, wasn't it?" said Landon, during a brief moment with Stella at the end of the terrace.

She nodded and smiled.

"And you," she added swiftly.

Landon's unlovely face creased into a frown of perplexity.

"I?"

"You were at the wheel while he was aloft, weren't you?"

"Oh, that!"

"Yes," said Stella gravely. "You'll dine to-night?"

Landon inclined his head, and retreated precipitately before the onrush of a nautical dowager. As a matter of fact, he needed no invitation to the Herriotts'. His status as a friend of the family was of the

"dropping in" sort—which made it all the more difficult to keep away.

In the lounge hall he found Herriott contemplating the cup he had won that afternoon.

"Conning the spoils, eh?" Landon commented.

Herriott turned and smiled.

"Yes," he said, "and thinking."

"Mistake!" grunted Landon.

"As a rule, perhaps, but not this time."

Herriott's eyes shone with enthusiasm. He held aloft the cup. "This empty bauble has filled me with horrid ambition."

"America's Cup, or anything like that?"

"Something as far from cups as I can get. I'm sick of 'em."

Landon nodded.

"And of racing, and racing machines, and white flannels, and club dinners, and clatrap. I want the sea!"

"Rather a large order, isn't it?"

"You ought to know."

Landon did know. There were few things he had not done in a somewhat hectic youth, from brass polishing to sailing before the mast.

"I've never had a chance to get out," complained Herriott. "Family, and that sort of thing—but I'm going to now. Stella agrees that it would do us both good."

"Both?"

"Yes. You don't imagine she'd be left out of anything like that, do you?"

Landon did not answer.

"I don't believe Lan approves," Herriott communicated to his wife in mock confidence during dinner. "Thinks the sea's altogether too much for us. We'll teach him!"

And they did, over coffee in the lounge.

"Elucidate the mystery," suggested Landon, stirring his cup thoughtfully.

"Certainly," beamed Herriott. "Our idea is no paid hands, salt junk, four hours on and eight off, and a passage—and perhaps a bucketing—in a boat, instead of a slithering match in a racing machine."

"Where to?"

"West Indies, for choice."

"I see," said Landon, after a pause.

"Drat the man!" Herriott broke out with a characteristic touch of impatience. "What's the matter? Think Stella's not up to it?"

Landon's slow glance traveled from his coffee cup to the delicate profile of the woman at his side.

"Because I may tell you she's the best hand I ever had aboard," Herriott defended loyally. "If you think the briny's too much for Stella, you ought to have been with us in the sailing dinghy when—"

"I wasn't thinking anything of the sort," said Landon quietly.

"Then perhaps you're frightened of *me*," suggested Herriott, with an incredulous but slightly nettled laugh.

Landon laughed also. The occasion called for it. Stella saw fit to come to the rescue.

"When you've quite done discussing me like a pound of pork," she said, "may I suggest that we're giving poor Lan rather an uncomfortable evening?"

"I hope so," grinned Herriott.

"And do you expect him to enthuse over anything? Because I don't."

"He needn't," complained Herriott; "but that's no reason why he should sit like an owl when his skipper—his skipper, mark you—suggests getting out of sight of the clubhouse for once."

"And all this," sighed Landon resignedly, "because I don't leap to my feet and wave my arms in ecstasy at the notion of you good people facing salt junk for a month!"

"Then you'll come?"

"I?"

"Listen to him!" wailed Herriott. "He's just tumbled to it that he's wanted."

Landon stared at his injured foot after a fashion of his.

"As to navigation," he suggested irrelevantly, "my mathematics are the memory of an ugly dream, these days. How are yours?"

"Worse. I thought of taking old Owen. He has a yachting ticket, and juggling with sights and figures is about all he's fit for."

Landon stirred in his chair, then rose abruptly.

"All right!" he said. "I'll go. I mean—"

"We know what you mean," laughed Herriott. "You mean that you will be delighted to accompany my wife and myself on a unique cruise to the West Indies."

"Something like that," said Landon. "Good night!"

When he had gone, Herriott fell to discussing plans with the ardor of a school-boy. He was intense, virile, over anything that took his fancy, and it was so that Stella loved to see him. They had been



married for a contented year, and it was their mutual taste for yachting that had brought them together. Stella would never forget that. Born of seafaring stock, and reared within sight and sound of the Atlantic's infinite moods, her own love of the sea and ships was innate. Unconsciously, perhaps, her standards were set by them. There are some women like that.

"There's no fathoming old Lan," Herriott called through to her from the dressing room that night. "I wonder if we're dragging him into this against his will!"

"I don't think any one could do that," she answered.

"I suppose not, but—"

The rest was smothered in a yawn, and Herriott fell to whistling a chanty between his teeth.

## II

STELLA awoke suddenly, completely, as one gets into the habit of doing at sea. The Pioneer, a snub-nosed, essentially seaworthy pilot cutter of fifteen tons register, converted into a luxurious cruiser by Herriott, was rolling idly, her canvas fluttering, the boom straining at the main sheet with every lurch of the ship.

Stella concluded that they were becalmed. Instinctively pitying the unfortunate man on watch, she settled down again to make the most of the few hours of sleep at her disposal.

From the first she had insisted on being treated as one of the crew, nothing more or less, and she had been taken at her word. In consequence, since leaving port four days ago, she had been happier than at any time since the girlhood days when she navigated her own small craft among the rocky bays and islands of her home.

The same sea sense which had told her that the Pioneer was becalmed now informed her that such a thing could not be. There was a breeze; she could hear it. Was it possible that the yacht had come up into the wind, that the helmsman had succumbed to the terrible drowsiness that often results from staring overlong at the swaying compass card? She slipped from the bunk of her minute cabin and passed through to where a sliding hatch afforded a glimpse of the helmsman in the steering well.

There was no one to be seen. The wheel was deserted and locked amidships. The Pioneer was hove to.

Through a porthole in the hatch coaming it was also possible to command a view of the forward deck. Here, with her face pressed close to the glass, Stella stood as one hypnotized. In the searching moonlight all was clear. Her husband and Landon were on deck, barefooted as always, but standing with bowed heads beside an indistinct shape that lay in shadow. Landon's lips were moving.

At the moment Stella was impelled to rush on deck. What had happened? Why had they not told her? Was this treating her as one of the crew? But something restrained her—perhaps the age-old discipline of the seafarer that was in her blood.

The captain, even if he was her own husband, had not seen fit to summon her. Perhaps he was right. Her presence might have made things more difficult. In any case, it was enough.

Landon's lips had ceased to move. The two men stooped, raised the burden at their feet, and gently lowered it over the side. When they straightened themselves, their hands were empty.

They came aft, talking in low tones; but when they sat down on the sliding hatch, every word was audible.

"And what on earth do we do now?" demanded her husband, in a voice that was new to her.

"Hush!" whispered Landon. "She still sleeps, thank God!"

"Hush nothing!" said Herriott petulantly. "She would be the first to want to be told."

There was a short pause.

"I know," said Landon. "Of course you must do as you think best."

The matter seemed to pass from Herriott's mind.

"We must turn back," he stated firmly. "That goes without saying; but what I don't know is how we're going to get there. Do you?"

It was the voice of a lost child.

"We have yesterday's noon position on the chart, and we've got a log. It's dead reckoning, and I can do that. If the present wind holds—"

"Ah, the wind!" muttered Herriott. "I was just thinking—"

"I shouldn't do too much of that. It isn't always good."

"What d'you mean?"

The captain's tone was truculent.

"I mean," came Landon's level response,

"that we're on a different lay to racing now. We're at sea. We've been playing at things; now we're up against 'em. What's more, we're 'hands'—not bad hands, as they go, but we can't navigate."

"Is that what made you so infernally chary of joining us?"

"Partly."

"And the rest?"

"There's something coming up from the northeast," said Landon. "How's the barometer?"

Stella heard him creep forward, down the forecable companion, and into the saloon. There was the brief flash of an electric torch, then darkness again, and the soft patter of his returning footfall.

"How is it?" came Herriott's anxious question.

"Fallen, and still at it."

"And what does that mean here?"

"Haven't a notion till it gets us," said Landon; "but we're all right hove to. Look here—this thing has got on our nerves, and small wonder. I suggest that you should turn in until dawn."

"And you?"

"I'm as comfortable here as anywhere."

"You'll call me if anything happens?"

"Double quick."

### III

By the time Herriott reached the saloon, Stella was in her bunk. She heard a cupboard opened softly, the faintest clink of glass, and a sigh as her husband settled down on one of the settees. She lay motionless, staring wide-eyed at the white-enameled timber overhead.

With the dawn a gray northeaster bore down upon the Pioneer, and quickly strengthened to a gale. Hove to under double-reefed mainsail, the little yacht took it without flinching, as she had been built to do. Stella busied herself with preparing hot drinks for the men when they should come below.

In passing through the saloon to the galley, she found her husband still outstretched on the cushions.

"Stella," he said, "I have something horrible to tell you. Owen died last night."

She did not attempt to simulate surprise, but sat on the settee beside him without speaking.

"He just petered out at the wheel," Herriott went on, in a strained voice. "It was my relief, and I found him sitting

there—dead. Heart failure, I suppose. We—we made quite sure, and then buried him."

"Why didn't you tell me?" said Stella gently.

"Lan—we both thought it best not to. We should never have brought him. It's my fault. I feel terrible about it!"

"Why?" said Stella. "You needn't. It was no one's fault. He knew what he was in for, and still wanted to come." She paused. "It's the way I should like to go, when I do go," she added quietly.

Herriott looked at her. There was something in his eyes that she had not seen there before.

"You take it well," he said.

"How else would you have me take it?"

"It's this awful feeling of responsibility for everything—everything," muttered Herriott. "It weighs me down. I must share it with some one!"

"Why not with me?" said Stella.

"Lan doesn't approve—"

"So much for Lan!" said Stella. "He's not captain."

"He ought to be."

Stella gave her husband a quick, almost startled look.

"He ought to be," repeated Herriott. "I feel it. He has this infernal sea knock of doing things without talking about them. He's a born seaman. I'm discovering that I'm not."

Stella put a finger to his lips.

"Never say that," she said. "I can't believe it."

"You mean you don't want to."

"I mean I don't want to and can't."

A wave crest smote the Pioneer a resounding thwack on her snub nose and swept the deck, dying with a gurgle in the scuppers. Herriott swung his feet from the settee.

"Listen!" he said. "You may as well know. We're hove to in a gale that may last a week, and drift us anywhere. There's nothing between us and the equator but the sea, and neither Lan nor I can navigate. I think that's all—oh, except that there are only fifteen gallons in the fresh water tank. You see the position?"

"Yes," she said. "Thanks—I like to know. I'll have breakfast ready in ten minutes."

Herriott caught her at the galley door.

"No, by thunder you won't!" he roared, thrusting her aside.

He commenced wrestling with the kettle in the reeling galley. Stella left him to it, and went on deck in oilskins. Landon, soaked through, was limping about the deck, seeing to lashings.

"Better go below," he shouted at her, above the turmoil of wind and sea.

She did not answer, but returned him look for look, and proceeded to help. Soon they had finished. The Pioneer rode like a cork. Gray, wind-swept hills of water bore down on her out of the angry murk ahead, but she soared to their summit and slipped down their reverse slopes with the agility of an acrobat.

"She's snug," shouted Landon, grinning through rivulets of salt water. "Stanch little packet!"

Stella nodded and smiled. He looked aft, and waved an arm.

"Sea room—that's all we want," he said; "and we've got it. She's all right. Come below!"

Stella was following him toward the companion when he turned in the lee of the hatch.

"Jack's told you?" he said.

"Yes," she answered, and they went below.

Herriott was fuming over the inadequacies of oil stoves in anything of a sea. When the meal was served, he sat silent and morose. He was a changed man, and he knew it. There is nothing quite like a prolonged bucketing in a small craft to give the best of us a glimpse of himself. Herriott felt vaguely that the sea had found him wanting, and the knowledge alternately surprised and tortured him.

Neither Stella nor Landon addressed him. They talked of the habits of sea birds during a storm, of the formation and action of waves, and similar trivialities. All this irritated Herriott beyond expression. Was it possible that they were blind to their position? Or were their verbal banalities a mask? In any case they were treating him as a child, he felt. It was a conspiracy between this friend of his and his own wife to humiliate and nullify him.

There was a bond between them, too. It was the first time he had noticed it. How long had it existed? What was it? He must be careful, very careful, but he was not to be fooled. Suspicion smoldered in his eyes.

He left the table abruptly and went on deck, to cling to the shrouds and stare

stonily over the tossing, wind-swept waste. In that hour it seemed to Herriott that the sea was imbued with personality. He had wanted it as his servant; it was here as his master. It was sapping his manhood, discovering him to his wife and to his friend. It was a mighty, unknown enemy that he hated and feared.

"Jack's out of sorts," said Stella, when he had gone.

"I know," Landon answered, without meeting her steady gaze. "You must remember I've known him a long time—longer than you."

She waited for him to go on, and he did. He had to do so.

"Salt junk, and one thing and another. He'll be all right in a day or two."

That was all they said. It was all they needed to say.

#### IV

For three days and three nights the Pioneer rode and drifted. With the dawn of the fourth the wind veered, without slackening its strength, to the opposite quarter. Landon noted the change.

"It's fair," he said. They were the first words he had uttered to Herriott in two days. "We ought to make all the northing we can."

"Fire ahead!" returned Herriott. "You're in charge."

"Since when?"

"Now."

"Why?"

"Because I choose."

The two men faced each other on the lurching deck. They had known each other as well as it is possible for one man to know another under normal, present-day circumstances; yet now each looked into the eyes of a stranger. Landon turned on his heel.

"All right!" he said. "Stand by to hoist the square sail."

Herriott obeyed with compressed lips, and presently the Pioneer was racing homeward before a following gale. At the wheel it was soul-racking work. The gray hills of water had grown to mountains, up which the little craft was lifted as by a giant hand, to be flung reeling into the valley beyond. Combers, seemingly out of the sky, hung over her and broke, as by a miracle, astern. It might have been fatal for the helmsman to look behind him. In the history of the sea more than one sailor

has been shot for so doing. The sight causes the breath to catch, the body to flinch for just that fraction of time that it takes to broach to and founder.

And Stella enjoyed it! Herriott made the amazing discovery that night when his wife was on watch, and her small, finely chiseled face came into the searching radius of the binnacle lights. It was the face of a thoroughbred engaged in combat that it loved.

The thing was inexplicable to Herriott. He dreaded his trick at the wheel with an intensity of which he had never dreamed himself capable.

At midnight, through the sliding hatch, he watched Landon relieve Stella. They talked. Herriott caught wind-blown snatches of it:

"Must be doing ten at the least—plumb on our course as far as I can make out—if this lasts—"

"She answers well."

"Like a bird. Ah, here they come!"

The hissing thunder of a breaker drowned the rest. The Pioneer was hurled into a pit that appeared bottomless, until at long last she brought up with a soul-sickening jolt. Landon's set face relaxed into a grin of triumph.

"Like a bird!" he repeated admiringly.

Herriott staggered to his bunk, gripped the creaking, white-enameled timber overhead in his two hands, and laughed—if it could be called a laugh.

"Like a bird!" he mimicked inanely between clenched teeth, and laughed again.

This was the bond between them, their inborn love of the sea that Herriott had thought his also, until the soul-revealing nightmare of the past two weeks. And now he found himself an outsider aboard his own ship—with his own wife! He was an intruder, a mountebank.

Herriott still hated the sea, but quite suddenly he no longer feared it. It was his enemy, and he would fight!

At four o'clock he went to relieve Landon.

"How's she going?" he asked.

"A bit tricky," said Landon, without taking his eyes from the swaying compass card.

Herriott waited, but Landon made no move.

"It's my watch," said Herriott.

"Do you think—"

"I've given up thinking—on your advice. It's my watch."

The Pioneer fell corkscrewing into an inky trough. Landon righted her with an effort.

"Stella's below," he said shortly. "You put me in charge. I'm going to carry on."

A white rage seized on Herriott, but he controlled it.

"I was sick," he said steadily. "I'm all right now, and I'll take over."

He waited for an answer, but there was none.

"If you don't hand over, I'll make you!" said Herriott.

"Don't be a fool—as well," muttered Landon.

Herriott took him in his powerful hands, flung him on deck, and seized the wheel.

"Go below," he ordered, and Landon went.

Outside Stella's cabin he paused.

"You heard?" he said.

"Yes," she answered.

"He took me by the scruff of the neck and pitched me on deck like a dog," Landon whispered gleefully. "He's at the wheel, with a face like thunder. Jack's found himself!"

"Thank you, Lan," said Stella.

That was an interview between his wife and his friend that Herriott never heard about; but when the Pioneer, after as evil a night as she had ever encountered, ran into fair weather, and finally picked up her mooring off the clubhouse, he took Landon aside.

"Is an apology any good, old man?" he asked.

"Not a bit," snapped Landon. "You ought to have brained me!"

## TWILIGHT

DAY fell, pierced as he turned for flight  
By Dian's shaft of argent light;  
Now sad gray nuns their mantles spread  
O'er the stained turf where lies the dead.

*Nelle Richmond Eberhart*



# A Soul and a Half

HOW PACIFIQUE LEMIEUX AND CALIXTE GALIPEAULT STROVE  
FOR A WOMAN'S SOUL AND A HIDDEN TREASURE

By William Merriam Rouse

SOME of the people of the parish of St. Jacques said that Calixte Galipeault was bewitched. It was not true. There are no witches, as all learned men know. However, it would not be at all surprising if the Evil One had a hand in the affairs of this Galipeault, for how else could he have gone as far as he did with the works of darkness?

In the first place, Galipeault was *yankifié*. This is not to say anything against the Yankees, who are—especially those from New York—a fine race of men, if somewhat strange in their actions. Their hearts are good. But it is not fitting that our young men should come back from the States with stiff collars around their necks and a contempt for *beau Canada*. That is what one means by *yankifié*.

Galipeault was seen to be *yankifié* when first he appeared in St. Jacques. He was widely traveled, having been in both Boston and New York, and he made the people feel, from the mayor to the poorest *habitant*, that they were inferior to him. He had money, but no business, and his only account of himself was that he had been born in Montreal and was now resting from recent large affairs in the States.

He had not been in St. Jacques three days before he saw Alma Rose Lemieux, the wife of Pacifique Lemieux; and it is not at all remarkable that he looked at her more than once. She might have been a woman of the *haute noblesse* that was in France before the great Révolution. Her hair was fine gold, and her eyes were as blue as heaven. She was like a fairy tale princess.

Did Galipeault try to get acquainted with Alma Rose stealthily? Not at all. He went to the house boldly, as if he did not have treachery in his black heart; and that

is why it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Evil One gave him inspiration. He knew when to be bold, and when to be crafty, and it was thus from the beginning to the end.

Pacifique Lemieux himself opened the door to Galipeault that evening, and heartily invited him into the kitchen. He placed a chair, took down the tobacco jar, and called to Alma Rose to bring a bottle of her best wine and some cakes. Then he permitted Galipeault to speak.

"Ah, M. Lemieux!" exclaimed Calixte, looking about the big room. "You know how to live—an American stove for *madame*—silver knives and forks—even screens at the windows! I have heard much of you in St. Jacques—of your good sense; and I perceive that it is all true!"

"Of me?" echoed Pacifique, well pleased. "Do you hear that, Alma Rose?"

Mme. Lemieux, laughing, and with faint red dyeing her cheeks, crossed the immaculate floor from the pantry.

"You have forgotten," she said, as she put down the homemade wine and the glasses, "that M. Galipeault and I are strangers!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" Pacifique chuckled at his own forgetfulness. "So you are! But one hears so often of M. Galipeault lately that he does not seem a stranger. Me, I have never had the honor of speaking to him before."

Galipeault got up and made his bow with a really good manner. He was naturally as lithe and graceful as a cat, although not by any means a small man. The supreme self-confidence which he felt here among these simple people, who worked on the soil and believed what the *curé* told them, gave him added ease.

"I understand now why one is content

to remain in St. Jacques. Mme. Lemieux is here!"

He knew instantly that he had pleased both of them. The color in the face of *madame* grew deeper, and her blue eyes darker. Lemieux—a very tall man, and very strong, with wrinkles of kindness about his dark eyes—looked at his wife with a face shining in the light of its own honest pride.

"She is perfect, my Alma Rose," said Pacifique; and to Galipeault the astonishing thing was that the man meant literally what he said.

"*Alors!*" Calixte stroked his black mustache and watched closely for the effect of his next words. "She should be in Quebec, or Montreal, or Boston. It is not right to keep her from being admired—from gay shops—the theater—hidden in this country that has six months of winter."

"*Parbleu!*" Pacifique smiled and shook his head. "We are *habitants*. Do you know, M. Galipeault, that my people have held this land for more than a hundred years? Why, Alma Rose would lose her red cheeks in a city, and I should not be able to breathe."

Calixte Galipeault had expected something like this; and he had also expected that the eyes of *madame* would grow, if only for an instant, a little brighter at the mention of shops and the theater. He was not disappointed.

"It was to show you how you can go to a city—any city—that I came to-night." Galipeault paused and shrugged. "However, if you have no desires that way, we won't talk of it. I, at least, shall have a pleasant visit to remember."

"How could we go?"

Alma Rose was leaning across the table, grave, searching the face of Calixte. Her husband said nothing. The puffs that he drew from his pipe came no faster, no slower.

"*Eh bien!*" Galipeault laughed. "It will not do any harm to speak of it, even if *monsieur* has made up his mind in advance. Some friends of mine in Boston have organized a great company to build homes for workmen. They will build these houses, sell them at enormous profit, and take their pay in installments. I put all of my money into the company, and just now I should like a little of it to use; so I would be willing to sell part of my stock, which is certain to pay twenty per cent in-

terest. But it won't be difficult to sell in Montreal."

"Why," asked Pacifique, "do you offer me this chance? There is *monsieur le maire*, for instance, and—"

Galipeault broke in with a wave of his cigarette.

"A question which shows your sound judgment, M. Lemieux! I have come to you chiefly because your word is known to be better than another man's writing. If you agreed to keep the stock for a year, say, drawing the interest yourself, and then let me buy it back, I could depend upon you. I do not want to lose that stock. It would not take a year's interest on many thousands to send you and *madame* to Quebec for a whole winter."

"Pacifique!" Alma Rose turned to her husband with sparkling eyes. "What do you think of that? It would be like finding money that belonged to no one!"

Pacifique Lemieux drew half a dozen threads of smoke from his *tabac Canadien* before he replied.

"I have lived all my life in this parish," he said, at last; "and therefore I suppose I am ignorant. However, I would rather keep my savings in good money that I can use at any time. That is not to say that I do not thank you very much, M. Galipeault, for I do. As for Alma Rose, if she wants to go to a city, I shall take her sooner or later. She shall have her fill of it; for never before did *le bon Dieu* bless a man with such a good wife!"

There followed a brief silence. Then Galipeault turned the conversation to his own adventures. After he had dazzled Alma Rose for half an hour with a description of the wonders of New York he bade them good night.

Pacifique emptied his pipe thoughtfully. He wound the clock.

"The cities!" murmured Alma Rose, half to herself. "How I should like to see them!"

"You will," Pacifique assured her. "You will see them in good time, well beloved!"

"But there was a chance now!"

"That is a question."

"You do not like M. Galipeault, because he is a man of the world!"

"On the contrary, my little one, I think he is a very fine fellow. No doubt he meant well by me; but consider. I give him the five thousand dollars which I have

saved, and in return I get some pieces of paper. I do not doubt that these friends of his are honest; but suppose they should fail, as good men sometimes do? What then? As it is now, I have my money under the flat stone just inside the stable door, where it cannot burn up, and where no one will ever look for it. You alone know where it is. I can find that money by night or day."

Alma Rose went up to him, smiling, and tried in vain to span one of his arms with her two hands.

"You are right, my man," she said. "I am a foolish wife—a very foolish wife!"

"You are an angel," said Pacifique, as firmly as one insists that the sun rises from the east. "Of all good women you are the best!"

Down in his room in the little hotel Calixte Galipeault was thinking pleasant thoughts as he pulled off his white collar and grinned at himself in the mirror.

"I hardly thought that even the fool Lemieux would trade good money for paper," he muttered; "but I found out exactly what I wanted to know. Like five *habitants* out of every six, he keeps his money hidden about the house. And as for that little doll—why, she'll be ready to go to Montreal or New York with me in a month at the most!"

Which will explain why Galipeault went to sleep that night with a faint smile lifting his mustache.

## II

THE mayor of St. Jacques, Télesphore Giroux, and Pacifique Lemieux were close friends; and it was Giroux, therefore, who, a month after Galipeault's first visit at the house of Lemieux, took upon himself the unwelcome duty of advising in this delicate matter.

"My friend," he said one evening, when they were sitting alone in front of the mayor's office, "I see that you have become very well acquainted with this Calixte Galipeault, who has been hanging around all summer."

"Ah, yes," replied Pacifique. "He is an entertaining man."

"He is at your house now, I think. I'm sure I saw him going that way half an hour ago."

There could be no mistake about this, for the house of Pacifique was the farthest

toward the mountains, and the lane that led there did not lead anywhere else.

"No doubt, Télesphore. Later I shall go home, and he and I will smoke a pipe together."

"He goes there when you are not at home, my friend."

"Certainly." Lemieux puffed evenly upon his worn brier. "Alma Rose likes him."

Télesphore Giroux, mayor of St. Jacques, sighed deeply. Also he muttered a curse at his good friend.

"This Galipeault is not—" The mayor hesitated. "He is not a good man!"

"Calixte? Ho! He is a good fellow. *Yankisé*, perhaps, but then we are old-fashioned, you and I."

The mayor groaned. Lemieux laughed.

"I read your thoughts," chuckled Pacifique. "Three things you have forgotten, Télesphore! This Galipeault is nothing worse than a little foolish, Alma Rose is perfect, and, in any event, *le bon Dieu* takes care of everything."

Pacifique made these statements so convincingly that for the moment the mayor was silenced, and almost convinced; but later on, when Lemieux had gone away through the summer night, Giroux again became certain of his own thoughts.

"There is tragedy in this!" he growled, wagging his head. "How can it be otherwise, with only a soul and a half among three people? For Galipeault has none at all, and that fluffy little plaything whom Pacifique married certainly cannot be possessed of more than half a soul. If the police of Quebec know anything of this scoundrel, I am going to find it out!"

## III

IF Télesphore Giroux had been invisible in the garden behind the house of Lemieux, one sultry afternoon a week later, he would have agreed with himself that his judgment was correct, at least as to what was going on in St. Jacques.

"It is like this," smiled Galipeault, explaining his plans for the twentieth time. "Pacifique will surely join you just as soon as he sees that you have succeeded. *Parbleu*, what is a little misunderstanding of a few weeks when it is going to make both of you so much happier? I will get him out of the way for a time this evening. Then you and I will cross the St. Lawrence. I have a boat ready. We will take a train

for the States. In two weeks you will be at work for one of the great companies that make cinema pictures. *Mon Dieu*, I have never anywhere seen a woman more beautiful than you! In a month you will write to Pacifique and send him a hundred dollars, perhaps five hundred dollars. Then he will say to himself: '*Sacré!* That little wife of mine knew best! I also will stop hard work!' Alma Rose, I am telling you the truth when I say that a man of his great size and appearance can make a fortune if he will only go where the fortunes are!"

Alma Rose knew all this by heart, and much detail which Calixte to-day left out. She believed him. She had made up her mind to do as he advised; but she needed to be told often, and particularly on this last day, that great good was to come to her by going away with Calixte Galipeault.

As the St. Lawrence flows to the sea, even when the tide comes in, so did a current of thought in her mind flow toward the idea that somehow harm might come out of this daring experiment. Over and over she was obliged to tell herself that it was perfectly simple, perfectly reasonable, and the best thing for every one. Alma Rose was not a fool, but she had never been more than a half day's journey from St. Jacques, and Calixte Galipeault was to her nearly as great a man as he said he was.

"*Eh bien!*" she sighed. "Be very sure that Pacifique does not catch us! He has never been angry in his life, as every one in the parish knows, but—"

"There is always a first time, *madame.*" Calixte was much more concerned over the anger of her husband than she knew. "Leave everything to me. Above all, do not get nervous. While Pacifique is bedding his horses to-night, he will receive a sudden call from the mayor. Before he can get back home, I shall take you away. Be ready!"

"Yes, Calixte—I will be ready."

With this repetition of her promise Galipeault, being wise, left her, and went about the completion of certain arrangements which he had begun to make weeks before.

#### IV

PACIFIQUE went out through the soft and perfumed darkness to make his beasts comfortable for the night, just as he did every evening before he himself went to

bed. He walked slowly, breathing in peace. Life had been good to him always, but he was not surprised at that. It was, he had often told himself, unavoidable that *le bon Dieu* should be good to all the world. Difficulties, in his opinion, were caused by one's failure to allow Heaven to take charge of affairs. It was magnificently simple.

Lemieux opened the barn doors and walked in, stepping upon the flat stone which covered his savings. A driveway, with a floor of packed earth, ran through the barn from one pair of big doors to another opposite. Thus a load of hay could be driven in and pitched off into the mows to right and left. From the mows the hay was forked out, day by day, to the cows at one end of the barn and to the horses at the other. Plank partitions, a little higher than Lemieux's shoulders, ran along each haymow from side to side of the barn.

Pacifique set his lantern down, and, as he was in the habit of doing, started to swing himself up to one of the mows.

"*Now!*"

He heard that single word, like a command, while he hung with his hands grasping the top of the partition. He heard the thud, thud, thud, of men dropping upon the packed earth.

Lemieux let go his hold, and turned as his feet reached the ground. A blow met him between the eyes and cracked his head against the planks. A hurricane of blows beat upon him. He reached out. His hand met cloth, and he drew a man toward him.

Pacifique seemed to be the center of a mob. He lifted the striking, cursing man whom he held by belt and collar and swung him in a semicircle. The crowding forms melted. Lemieux heaved his captive away and steadied himself.

The mob resolved itself to six men—men whom he had never seen before. Like wolves around a bear they watched him, half crouched, waiting for a word of command or a favorable opportunity to close in again. The attack had been silent, the waiting now was silent, and that made it all the more ominous.

The man whom Lemieux had handled got up slowly.

"What do you want?" asked Pacifique, in a voice no louder than his ordinary tones.

He had addressed the question to one who seemed to be the leader, but there was no answer from any of them.

Lemieux had a suspicion that they want-



ed his money, and yet that did not make the matter wholly plain. However, he wasted no time in speculation. It was necessary to convince these strangers, as quickly as possible, that it would take more than six, or even twelve, to get his money—unless they shot him.

He was not at all angry. His only desire was to get rid of them with as little damage as possible.

All together they came at him again, with hardly so much as a warning movement before the attack. Pacifique struck three times, and at each smash of his fist a man went down. The leader clenched, in a desperate attempt to get his fingers into the eyes of Lemieux. Pacifique hugged him, and he went limp, with the breath rasping in his throat.

The rush ended before it was well begun. Four men were down on the floor of the barn, and of these the leader and another were unconscious.

"This is foolishness," said Pacifique mildly. "You are getting yourselves hurt to no purpose. And me, I have to feed my animals. Go wherever you came from, *mes amis*, and the peace of God go with you!"

A river of terrible fire streamed before the eyes of Pacifique Lemieux. Like water his strength went from him; and he knew as he plunged forward into oblivion that some one had hit him from the mow above. After that flash—nothing.

## V

PACIFIQUE awoke to pain. Even before he could form any idea of where he was, he remembered the fight, and its ending. Slowly he realized that he was bound, helpless, hung up after the manner of a man crucified.

He opened his eyes and met faint light. He knew the vague shadows above him for the roof of the barn. He lifted his head, which had been lying back upon something hard, and saw his lantern on the ground—a haymow opposite.

Then he knew. He was trussed up with his arms over one of the partitions, and his toes just scraping the earth. That was why the pitchforks of ten thousand imps were prodding his shoulders. All his weight hung from his arms.

He became aware that Calixte Galipeault was standing in front of him, looking up into his face. The swift thought of rescue was wiped out by wonder that Galipeault

made no move, said no word. Lord God, the man was grinning!

Pacifique tried to make his dry mouth speak, but before the words would come Calixte asked a question.

"Where is your money?"

So Galipeault was the real leader in this affair!

"Calixte!" cried Pacifique thickly. "This is very bad! If you need money, you had only to ask. *Mon Dieu*, I would not buy your stock, because accidents happen; but I would have lent you—"

"*Sacré bon Dieu!*" snarled Galipeault. "Where is the money, you fool?"

He whipped out a hunting knife and advanced toward Lemieux.

"If you will, you will!" groaned Pacifique. "I cannot help you if you will not listen. As for the money, it's under that flat stone just inside the doorway."

Galipeault leaped to the closed doors and thrust his head out.

"It's all right!" Pacifique heard him say, in a low voice. "Now get out of St. Jacques as fast as you can!"

Calixte seized a pitchfork and pried up the stone. He lifted out the tin box in which Lemieux kept his savings, and twisted off the lock. The money was there, and with a cry of victory he turned back to his prisoner.

The sweat of agony ran into the eyes of Pacifique and blurred his vision a little. Nevertheless, he was not yet angry. Sorrow had swallowed the possibility of anger. Here was this Calixte Galipeault foolishly justifying the evil that Télesphore Giroux thought of him!

"Take the money and go," said Pacifique calmly.

Calixte grinned, but inwardly he was a little shaken. He knew well what else he meant to take after he had put the body of Lemieux deep into the hay. Nevertheless, it was not so easy to kill a man who met anger with no anger.

It had been different in the affair that had sent him scurrying into the country to hide. Charles Eugène Dufour, his last victim, had died cursing, trying to set his teeth into Galipeault's thumb. It had been over in a minute, without hesitation; but the eyes of this big fool were smiling at him!

Calixte decided to change all this. With his catlike quickness he moved, swifter than sight, and his knuckles drew blood from the mouth of Pacifique.

The smile was wiped away, and for an instant Calixte hoped; but the eyes of Pacifique, although they had become grave, did not give forth the glare of anger.

"Pig!" whispered Calixte. "I am going to take your wife also!"

"Ah! So you are going to kill me?"

Galipeault, raging, knew that this was not a triumph. He had the money, and undoubtedly he would soon have the beauty of the woman, but there was lacking a zest to the moment—and all because this incredible *imbécile* would not hate him! Lemieux would fight, but he would not hate!

The taste of his own hatred was no longer sweet; but it was not the less deadly because of that. He struck again, and cut his knuckles upon the teeth of Lemieux.

"You fool, where is *le bon Dieu* now?" he sneered.

He drew his knife and slowly advanced the point until it pressed against the side of Lemieux, just below the ribs.

Pacifique drew a great breath. It was a labor of agony, for the weight upon his arms was more anguish than he had supposed man could endure.

"*Le bon Dieu* is here—in thee!" he panted. "If I could not see Him there, I should not know—that He is my strength—even now!"

For a space of seconds there was no sound in the barn but the breathing of Pacifique.

Calixte could not tell whether the crushed and bleeding lips were trying to smile, but he could see in the eyes of Pacifique Lemieux a strange softness that was without the shadow of hatred or of fear. He had never seen that look before. Yes—he had seen it. He had seen it in the eyes of his mother!

The breathing of Calixte Galipeault became as labored as that of his prisoner. The point of the knife drew away. Slowly it lowered.

At a sound from the doors Galipeault turned, crouching. He faced Alma Rose. Her white dress was like a pure white light against the background of the night. Her yellow hair caught little gleams from the lantern. Her eyes were aflame.

It may have been that she looked to him like a rebuke from his own soul. Certainly he cried out with a cry that cut up into the cobwebbed spaces above, like a shriek soaring through the upper reaches of hell. The knife leaped from his hand, clattering across the floor, and he dashed past Alma Rose into the blackness of the outer world.

He was still running from his own madness when he reached the office of Téléphore Giroux, where the officers from Quebec were thanking the mayor for having notified them of the whereabouts of Calixte Galipeault.

## VI

It was a new Alma Rose Lemieux who looked upon the drama in the barn. In her eyes Pacifique read that the rose had blossomed. For a long time he had been watching the bud, waiting, hoping for the perfect flower.

"My man!" she sobbed. "Oh, my man!"

She snatched up the knife and cut his wrists free. Pacifique went to his knees, fell forward upon his face, and then, with her small hands tugging to help, raised himself and sat with his back against the wall, slowly regaining strength.

"Thou art my man, Pacifique! Oh, mother of God, forgive me!"

The eyes of Pacifique smiled. He was not troubled about Alma Rose, for how could one already perfect need forgiveness from him or from Heaven? He was thinking of the man who had gone shrieking into the darkness.

"I knew Calixte was not bad," he said. "He only thought he was!"

## THE VAIN FEAR

Put your hand on my arm! Do you know  
How we dreaded these days, long ago?  
How we feared for the time when my touch would not throb  
In your veins and your soul till your breath was a sob?  
When I should awake, kiss your eyes, turn, and dream?  
We looked life in the face—so we said. This would seem,  
So we said, like the death of our dead  
From our memory, where they lie, quiet and warm.  
Well, sweet? Is it so? Ah, your heart on my arm!

Richard Leigh

# Mr. Cassidy

IT IS A FINE THING TO BELONG TO THE MYSTERIOUS ORDER  
OF WHICH ANNA MARSHALL'S BENEFACTOR WAS A MEMBER

By John D. Swain

ALL day long men who had known James Marshall called to look upon him as he lay, banked with costly flowers, in the great library whose books he had selected with rare taste, and until the past two years had read and reread.

His widow, a sweet-faced woman of forty-two, greeted each caller, her emotions perfectly controlled. Indeed, what grief she felt was for the husband of two years and more ago, before paresis had begun its insidious attack upon the splendid mind. It was then that he had died, to her. Death itself had inevitably followed, and had come as a release.

More than any other man, Marshall had been responsible for making the suburbs of his native city a place of beautiful homes. It was a cruel irony that the sumptuous house in which he was spending his last day did not belong to his heirs. The attorneys who represented all the prominent families in town had, as tactfully as possible, advised Anna Marshall some months ago, before her husband's condition was realized and a guardian appointed, that he had frittered away his fortune—the fortune that his foresight and industry had built upon the dumps and unkempt pastures which landscape gardeners and architects, under Marshall's guidance, had made into a residential section as fine as can be found in New England.

Now twilight was stealing through the silent house, the last caller, it seemed, had gone, and a servant was lighting the great candles. It had been a whim of the master's to use candles in his library, and it was fitting that they should now cast their gentle light upon his closed eyes.

It was just as Anna was turning to ascend to her own room that the maid opened the door to admit one belated caller.

The man upon whom the widow of James

Marshall gazed with involuntary surprise was of a type so different from the sleek, correct figures which had passed in and out all day, that she did not for an instant regard him as one bound upon an errand of condolence. His thick, muscular body was tightly buttoned into a black frock coat. He seemed to be fighting strangulation from the clutch of a highly glazed collar of the old-fashioned wing tip variety. His black-gloved hands bore a floral emblem of such atrocious design that, even in her distress, Mrs. Marshall's eyes were drawn to it in fascinated horror.

Upon a white, pillow-like background two ill-shaped clasped hands were picked out in purple immortelles. Yards of black satin ribbon were caught in enormous bows at the corners. She waited for the messenger—as she decided him to be—to mention the donor of this floral crime.

The man removed his hat—a black derby, a trifle too small for his bullet head—and bowed stiffly.

"'Tis Mr. Cassidy, ma'am—meself. I've come to look once more on your man."

There was a sort of uncouth dignity about his speech, enhanced by the very straight line of his lips above the square, cleft chin, and the piercing blue of his eyes.

Some old employee, she thought—perhaps the elevator man from her husband's office; or possibly a taxi chauffeur whom he had occasionally employed. She smiled in the friendly way which was characteristic of her, and led him at once into the library.

For some time the stranger gazed upon the pale mask of James Marshall, shaking his head slowly from side to side, his lips moving. Then he carefully deposited his floral tribute in a conspicuous place, and placed his hat beside a chair.

"I'll sit up the night with the corp," he announced simply.

Even so tactful a hostess as Anna Marshall could not conceal her surprise at these unexpected words. Her eyes widened.

"Oh, but Mr. Cassidy! We don't do that, you see—not since my grandmother's day, out in the country."

Cassidy bowed stiffly.

"To be sure—as you prefer, ma'am, of course. And now you'll be wondering who is Mr. Cassidy, I dunno? I'll take this occasion to say"—he glibly launched upon a little speech which had evidently been carefully rehearsed—"that in coming here at this time I discharge me own sad obligations, but that even more I riprint that gr-r-reat fraternal order to which himself and me belonged."

Again surprise widened Anna's eyes.

"Yes? I did not know that my husband had ever joined anything but his clubs. What is the name of the order, please, that I may send them a card of thanks?"

Cassidy mumbled something she did not catch. Indeed, her interest passed as soon as the words left her lips. After all, what did it matter? Save that it was passing strange that James Marshall, an aristocrat in every sense, should have affiliated with any group which could possibly be represented by such a grotesque emissary, the steady current of her sad reflections was not rippled by the occurrence.

Cassidy was bowing himself out now, and a moment later the door closed upon his husky figure.

## II

LATE at night Anna Marshall emerged from one of the fitful naps which had mocked the flagging hours. It was mid-summer, breathlessly still and warm. Her room was on the front of the house; and she rose and crossed it to gaze listlessly down into the broad avenue lined with elms, blue-green where the glare of the arc light tinged their leaves.

Her startled eyes beheld a black figure sitting upon the granite steps before the door. It was Cassidy, his hat reposing by his side, a short cuddy pipe alight between his lips!

For a moment she was merely astonished—an emotion which was swiftly replaced by a vague alarm. Why should this mysterious character, so unlike any of Marshall's associates, be haunting their home? Who was he, and what obscure menace underlay his advances?

It was with relief that she heard the firm, measured tread of Jackson, the night patrolman. Jackson was a conscientious, taciturn officer who permitted no irregularities of any sort on his beat, and who was the bane of loiterers, amorous servants, and noisy boys. He would need no hint to send Cassidy on his way!

So it was with a distinct shock that she beheld this bulwark of their avenue pause at her door, but with a respectful salute, followed by a whispered chat; after which Jackson resumed his patrol, leaving Cassidy peacefully smoking the pipe he had not even removed from his teeth!

Anna's perplexity remained, but her uneasiness vanished. The man must be harmless; but she could not guess why Jackson had permitted him to use the Marshall steps as a smoking den.

Dawn was breaking when she rose and looked out again. Cassidy, his hat wedged firmly on his head, was knocking the dottle from his pipe. His vigil was ended. While she watched, he walked away, with no backward glance.

She did not see him at the church services; but his sable figure was well in the rear of the few who stood bareheaded while James Marshall's body was committed to the mausoleum he had built years before.

In her time of distress Anna Marshall had been touched by every little thoughtful act, regardless of its source. The correctly engrossed resolutions sent by various organizations and clubs had genuinely moved her; and even the uncouth condolences of this unknown man had not lacked of their effect. When, however, less than a week after the funeral, her sole remaining servant announced that Cassidy was at the door, she was vexed at what she felt to be an intrusion.

She sent down word that she was not at home to him. After an interval the girl returned to say that he refused to be dismissed, and insisted that his errand was one of importance.

With an unwonted frown between her eyes, she descended, fully prepared to make it clear to Mr. Cassidy that, much as she appreciated his solicitude, she must request that he, and the brotherhood he represented, should not further occupy themselves with her affairs.

She bowed coldly upon entering the room—the same library into which he had come the first time. She neither offered her hand



nor invited him to be seated. She might have saved herself the pains; for Cassidy reached out and found her hand, wrung it, and then seated himself, depositing his hat beside him on the floor.

Anna, feeling rather ridiculous, could do no less than seat herself.

"It has come to the ears of the society I riprint," began Cassidy, "that your affairs are in bad shape, Mrs. Marshall."

Anna flushed with resentment, and sharp words rose to her lips; but she bit them off. After all, what did it matter? Every one knew the facts. She nodded a little defiantly.

"In such bad shape, Mr. Cassidy, that I shall owe a great deal more than I can ever pay."

The visitor pursed his lips.

"Aye—so they do be telling me. Now that's too bad indade! And the children—how about them?"

"Claire is eighteen. She must go to work. Little Jim is only five, and I don't know *what* to do about him! You see, we have no people left, only an aunt of my husband's, who lives out in Indiana. She has offered to take Jim, but she is very poor. I—I am nearly distracted!"

"Well, now, 'tis what I feared, ma'am. 'Twill do the girl no harm at all to earn her own way, after a bit; but the place of young Jim is with his mother. And 'tis of that same I come to speak. Ye see, 'tis the rule in our fraternal order, in such cases made and provided, that some brother be elected to find a home for the widow and orphans till they can fend for themselves. In this case, meanin' meself."

"Why, Mr. Cassidy!" cried Anna, her voice sharp with surprise. "What an idea! I do not even know you!"

"Ye will, before we part, ma'am! And bear in mind, if the tables was turned, and 'twas meself dead and broke, then 'twould be me widow and orphans would come to bide with ye, belike; and there's nine of 'em! It's easy I'm getting off, with only two children to take in, and one of them a young colleen grown."

Anna Marshall was stricken dumb by the picture evoked by Cassidy. She could not bring herself to refute his confident assumption that her husband would consent to harbor ten Cassidys at the behest of any society whatever, even were she acquiescent; but had any one predicted that she would accept such an offer for herself, she

would have classified them as hopelessly if not dangerously insane. And yet, an hour later, this was precisely what she had done.

She was nearly distracted with worry, and lacked her usual firmness of resolution. She knew not where to turn. She was actually living on the proceeds of her personal jewelry, of which she had never owned much, her tastes being simple. To be sure, one or two women of her set had in rather lukewarm fashion invited her to their country houses for the remainder of the season; but it was the husbands of these same women who had helped to strip Marshall of his fortune when his mind weakened and his business acumen failed.

And Cassidy was some persuader! He was inflexible as rock, when set upon anything; and Anna, listening more to his voice than to the words it enunciated, knew that it welled up from an honest, kindly heart.

Dazed at her own surrender, yet with a vast relief at being swept along by an irresistible current, she found herself promising to come to the Cassidy home the following week.

"'Tis the rules av the order, ma'am, as inscribed in the by-laws," were his parting words—as if that took the affair out of their hands and eliminated all question of favors bestowed or accepted.

Four days later, the Marshall home bore a sign announcing that it was for sale. Its furnishings were on display at an auction dealer's—all but a few treasures which Cassidy had sent a man to crate for Mrs. Marshall, to be stored in his own attic. With three trunks and numerous bags, not to mention violently throbbing hearts, Anna and her pretty daughter stood on the Cassidy piazza and pressed the annunciator.

As for young Jim, it was a great adventure, with alluring possibilities, to go and live in a house with nine children. Why, they could have a whole nine, and a utility player over—that is, if the girls could play ball.

Mrs. Cassidy herself answered the bell. She was a huge, red-faced woman, with a mighty apron covering her front. She threw wide the door and her arms, and gathered Anna Marshall to her broad bosom.

"There now, poor lamb! 'Tis glad I am to see ye," she said.

Whereupon the exquisite Anna, whose sensitive aloofness was a jest in her own circle, burst into tears and clung to the

older woman as to a sure support. Over her shoulder, Cassidy, his cuddy pipe alight, nodded with satisfaction.

"'Twas the one thing I longed to see her do! There's naught so healing as a good cry; and 'twill not be the first tears that's fell on Mary's breast!"

### III

THE Cassidy home never lost its fascination in Anna's eyes. Built some forty years before, and considered a show house in its day, it had all the features which characterized its period, with whatever modern improvements its owner had taken a fancy to install.

The rooms were spacious and high-studded, and there were so many of them that even the prolific Cassidys could not populate them all. The dining room was in the basement, and all the cooking was done over a coal range. The heating plant was of the ancient furnace and register type, but there were also the latest portable gas and electric heaters, and fans.

The pleasant room assigned to their guest contained a green cord which rang a bell in the kitchen, in case she needed service; but it also contained a mahogany-boxed radiophone of such power that she could cut in on a musical program five hundred miles away.

The house was crammed with huge, ugly furniture, and upon its walls hung, side by side, floridly framed reproductions of worthless originals, magazine covers to which one or another of the family had taken a fancy, and two priceless Corots, added to the collection by Heaven knows what strange chance. There was an expensively bound set of the latest and best encyclopedia in the library, and on the shelf below a well thumbed pile of paper thrillers.

Upon a table stood a huge album of the greenest plush Anna had ever seen, with a shiny brass harp embossed upon it. The establishment maintained a billiard room in the attic, and a bowling alley in the cellar, shut off by sound-proof walls. A great, unkempt, yet rather fascinating garden at the back had a thrifty vegetable patch, some straggling flowers and shrubs, several iron chairs and dogs, and one mutilated iron stag. Most of the grass had been worn off by the feet of many little Cassidys.

Anna's room and the adjoining one—Claire's—overlooked this area. They were never intruded upon. "Mother Mary," as

her brood called her, tactfully offered to have their meals sent up; but Anna refused to permit this.

Nor were the meals the least interesting phase of the strange new life. The ample table was set with Gargantuan dishes. The old cook, Nora, usually came in and ate her dinner with the rest, toward the end.

Such enormous platters of corned beef and cabbage and boiled potatoes the Marshalls had never beheld; such colossal roasts, such schools of boiled and fried fish. Everything was put on the table at once; there were never less than four pies and a couple of gallons of milk. There was little variety—rarely a soup or a salad; but hot gingerbread, apple sauce, pickles, jellies, and cookies served as side dishes.

Mr. Cassidy carved skillfully. When the noise reached a certain pitch, he beat upon his plate with a fork, whereupon a sudden and startling silence fell. He talked well and acutely of current events, and Anna often surprised herself by asking him about phases of finance and politics which she had never really understood. His explanations were nearly always lucid, if sometimes dogmatic.

Mother Mary took no part in these discussions. She cared little for modern "isms" or changing fashions. A Christian woman, who had brought nine hearty youngsters into the world, she found her time fully engaged in molding them into good citizens. She was a stanch member of a vanishing race—the old-fashioned mother.

It seemed to Anna that she had never eaten so much in her life; yet the Cassidys, used to having plates passed up for the third helping, continually fretted over her poor appetite.

"'Tis a little porter will give it an edge," Mr. Cassidy decided.

"But hardly to be had, these days," said Anna.

"Whisht! Annything is to be had if ye want it bad enough!"

Sure enough, a case materialized, with the genuine Dublin labels on the bottles. After that she began to feel alarm at the growing tightness of her clothes.

Her host had laid down the law that for two weeks she was to do nothing but rest, eat, and sleep. Later, he said, they would have a business talk. She smiled at the phrase—meaningless to one who owned only the clothes on her back.

Yet, strangely, she did not fret. There was something so novel about her present life—never had she been able to understand why she had accepted the amazing invitation—and there was, above all, such an air of protection, of security, in this home, that her mind simply refused to dwell on the dark future which loomed so close ahead.

She loved to sit for hours and watch the garden. All sorts of thrilling events took place therein. One day it was filled with twoscore little ones, amid whom moved the black-gowned sisters of some orphanage. All afternoon they shouted and frolicked; and Cassidy himself joined in their games, and helped to serve a wonderful luncheon, with plenty of ice cream and lemonade to top it off.

When twilight fell, they gathered about the iron stag, while their thin young voices rose sweetly in song to Anna's window. Then, led by the tall sisters, they gave three hearty cheers for Cassidy, and filed out.

It was quite a different gathering which held wassail until past midnight a few days later. The men were not like any with whom Anna had ever come in contact. Some had broken noses and queer, thickened ears. There were undershot jaws, vivid waistcoats, diamond horseshoe pins, and big diamond rings on swollen knuckles.

These details and many others the watcher descried through the blue smoke screen which soon floated above their heads. And there were kegs of some amber fluid, which met with great favor as it was drawn into mighty steins. She wondered if these men were brother members of that mysterious organization to which her husband had, most surprisingly, belonged!

Mr. Cassidy's eyes were slightly swollen at breakfast the next morning, and he took his coffee without cream or sugar; but the Marshalls did not observe this, as they had their coffee in their own room, being unable to acquire the hearty breakfast habit of the house.

Not all the garden happenings were so entertaining to Anna. Little Jim, who had found life as gorgeous an adventure as he had hoped, had been adopted by Michael, of his own age and size. The two were inseparable, although they engaged freely in the games of the rest of the children; but one day Anna was horrified to behold a real fight in progress.

Her baby was squaring off, fists clenched,

lower jaw outthrust, left arm advanced in true ring style against a scowling Mike, similarly posed. Real blows were exchanged, too; even a few drops of blood oozed from tender lips. Screaming, she tore downstairs, how she never knew. It seemed to her that her feet did not touch one-third of the steps.

At the back door she bumped into Mr. Cassidy, who, his pipe drawing well, was calmly watching the fray. His blue eyes danced as he caught and held her terrified gaze.

"Whisht, now! 'Twill do them no harm at all, at all! 'Tis best they learn early; and they'll be all the better friends after."

Only by a violent effort did she restrain herself from rushing to her Jim's assistance; but the affair ended as quickly as it had begun. As Cassidy had said, no harm befell. In two minutes more they were trying which could leap to the back of the iron stag, *à la* William Harte.

Different, but equally disturbing, were the low-voiced chats in the moonlight between Claire and Tom Cassidy, the eldest son, who was twenty-four, and just beginning the practice of law.

Claire had suffered a pretty severe change in her pampered life. From an expensive finishing school, with all the numberless activities of a girl of eighteen and a preposterous allowance, to Cassidy's and corned beef and cabbage!

To her mother's surprise, the girl had met the disaster without a whimper. She took a great fancy to old Nora, the cook, and spent hours in the kitchen, learning how to boil and bake and roast and fry. Great was her triumph when she bore her first batch of doughnuts into the dining room!

With the uncanny divination of mothers of pretty girls, Anna first noted a tendency in young Tom, always neat, to be a little more fastidious, particularly in his neckwear. Too often, she thought, his blue eyes followed Claire about. He was a handsome lad, with the look of a poet and a thick mane of black hair. Long after the rest had retired, he and Claire sat talking softly in the garden.

Anna dreaded to speak to her daughter, fearing that she would thereby cause her to regard seriously what was, she hoped, only the natural and casual drawing together of a young man and maiden of different walks

of life. Not once did she behold the slightest attempt at any familiarity on Tom's part. Indeed, the two young people sat almost primly, with their iron chairs well spaced.

It was the talk, innocent enough, even banal, which nevertheless alarmed the listening mother. Only fragments came to her, but these were laden with a deadly meaning for her experienced ears.

"Of course," Tom was saying one night, "I could be earning a good deal more if I'd gone to work for father; but I believe a fellow ought to make his own way. Don't you? Me, too! And in time I'll make more in the law than I would with him."

Again he told Claire of a really big case he had got.

"He gave me a retainer of two hundred and fifty—almost enough to buy one of those parlor suites of four pieces they advertise at the Emporium!"

Then he laughed in an embarrassed way, and became shy and silent when Claire, instead of making any reply, gazed dreamily at him through half closed lids.

Anna shuddered, and turned away with panic in her heart. And yet, she asked herself, why?

Tom Cassidy was as fine a specimen of young manhood as any she had known in their own set. He had that which so few of them possessed—the grit to make his own unaided way. Why—the thought caught at her throat—Claire would be a poor match for him! The girl was a pauper. She knew nothing of housework, nothing a poor man's bride should know, save what old Nora had shown her in the past few days.

This thought Anna carried over into her dreams, wherein Cassidy stormed at Claire as a fortune hunter seeking to vamp his first-born into wedlock!

### IV

So swiftly had time sped that it was on the very next day that Cassidy, the two weeks having elapsed, sat down to a little business conference with his guest.

The question of Claire's self-support had been unexpectedly settled by that young woman herself. Without consulting her mother, she had enrolled in an evening class in a business school, and was learning typewriting and stenography. Instead of reading fiction in the afternoons, she was

poring over textbooks of elementary law and office system.

It was understood that a desk awaited her in the office of a promising young attorney just as soon as she was able to type a readable sentence beginning "Now is the time." So anxious was the lawyer to secure a secretary that he stood ready to waive even this minor test; but Claire refused to consider a position until her instructors were willing to give her a letter of recommendation.

With Claire full of pep, and not even following the golf and tennis news, Cassidy was able to concentrate upon the case of Mrs. Marshall and little Jim.

"About your lawyer, now. We—our brotherhood—employs its own attorney to protect the widows and orphans of members. I'd like him to go into your affairs, ma'am."

"But Jernigan knows all about them," objected Anna. "He has always had my husband's legal business."

"Oh, aye—a big man he is; but, ye see, he also handles the affairs of all Marshall's rivals and competitors. Now that's bad. Mind, I don't say wan wor-rd forninst Jernigan; but 'tis better to have a lawyer who doesn't ripisint both sides, d'ye see?"

Anna nodded doubtfully.

"I'm satisfied there's nothing left, Mr. Cassidy; and I have no money to pay Jernigan, let alone any new counsel."

"I'm tellin' ye my man is retained by the society. He'll take the case on a contingent fee, as they call it—and a small one, too. Me own brother is his associate."

"Why not let your boy Tom have the chance, if there is one?"

Cassidy shook his head decidedly.

"He's not seasoned enough for that. 'Twill take an old head to ferret out all the twists and knots in this tangle, I'm thinking. If Tom took the case and bungled it, 'twould be a black eye he'd wear for years."

Listlessly Anna assented. She had no faith in the ability of any one to disprove what Jernigan had said; but she collected all her husband's papers, and prepared to give her full sanction, for the same reason that had always compelled her, in the end, to yield to the inflexible Cassidy and the dictates of his mysterious fraternity.

It was, nevertheless, with a shock of revulsion that she looked into the face of Mr. Lazarus that afternoon, across the library table with its green plush album.



Lazarus was under-sized, and his hands were like claws. In his pock-marked face, the knife edge of his high-bridged nose was all that prevented his two ratty eyes from merging into one. The only big things about him were his feet and his ears.

Under the rapid fire of his keen and intelligent queries, however, she soon forgot his repulsive appearance. At subsequent interviews she was unconscious of him save as an adroit and vivid mind.

There ensued a period of inaction on her part, during which all of Cassidy's persuasive powers were needed to induce her to stay on until the suits which Lazarus was bringing were concluded. For he had accused some dozen men of the highest standing in the business and social life of the city of conspiring to take advantage of James Marshall's failing mind. It was a big order, and even Lazarus was none too hopeful; but he proposed to create troubled waters, and to go a fishing in them.

The trial stirred the city to its dregs. Under Lazarus's merciless probing, ancient skeletons emerged from forgotten closets and rattled their obscene bones. He managed to install a dictograph in an office where it would do the most good, and its revelations furnished wonderful copy for the press. At least one gavel was worn out by the court officer, and more exceptions were filed than an adding machine could count.

Mrs. Marshall appeared in court but once, when she testified as to her husband's mental condition during the past two years. Thus she missed the summing up of Cassidy's brother, who was dragged forth from the alcoholic limbo in which he dwelt, to address the jury.

He had sat up all the previous night, going over the evidence with Lazarus at one elbow and a pot of black coffee at the other. Toward dawn, without taking off his clothes, he caught a few hours' sleep on the office couch. In court he was the replica of his brother, only a redder, less forceful, less clear-eyed replica.

His face wore a fixed smile which never left it. Not once did he raise his husky voice above a conversational note; but he often dropped, with singular and even sinister effectiveness, into a piercing whisper which carried clearly to all parts of the packed room.

Embroidering his recital with numerous figures of speech drawn from the animal

kingdom, he pictured the "pack" which had operated with the late James Marshall, and which had, with unerring instinct, noted and taken advantage of the decay of his splendid powers, even as wolves turn on a sick or wounded comrade and devour it. He whispered that they were "hyenas in silk underwear." Again, changing the figure, he spoke of them as "uttering broad vowels with forked tongues." He marveled that any reputable attorney would sanction such contracts as Marshall had signed during the past year. He went as far as it was possible to go, and avoid contempt of court.

Still wearing his set smile, and speaking as gently as at the beginning, he closed by referring to "these vultures who, not content with stripping the man who more than any other had made his city a place of beautiful homes, were now foregathered that they might take from his widow *even that which she had not!*"

Long before he closed it was evident that the jury yearned to send somebody to the chair—yea, to the stake—and that they begrudged the necessity of leaving their box to go through the formality of a ballot.

The net result of the verdict was borne to Anna somewhat later by the jubilant young Tom Cassidy, who, with Claire, had sat through every session. Mrs. Marshall would recover, from what had seemed a total wreck, a sum somewhat in excess of fifty thousand dollars. From this the firm of Lazarus & Cassidy deducted the exceedingly modest fee of one thousand dollars—a record, for them!

"And now we'll be lookin' about for a little home for ye," Cassidy told his guest. "Sure, an' it's ruinin' us ye are, eatin' us out of house and home, not to speak of makin' me break the Volstid Law for ye!"

His blue eyes danced, and she laughed with him.

There followed days of chugging about the countryside in Cassidy's flivver, ending in the purchase of a pretty little five-room bungalow near a clear pond, and with a neighborhood golf club within easy walking distance. Claire would live there, too, commuting to the city until such time as she had finished her business education. On holidays she initiated young Tom Cassidy into the mysteries of golf and tennis.

Anna, thinking over the hectic month through which she had passed, wondered no longer that her husband had belonged

to a society whose members had at first seemed so utterly foreign to him. She could see at least one trait that they had in common with him—they were men who went through with anything they undertook. Moreover, they played the game. They might be crude, rough, uncultured; but they were real men, even as he had been a real man.

## V

Two strangers sat on the piazza of the Westland Golf Club one summer evening. Their voices came through the warm dusk to where, in a vine-shadowed corner, Anna Marshall sat with little Jim asleep, his curly head in her lap.

"How came this man Cassidy to interest himself in Jim Marshall's affairs?" asked the younger of the two men.

"That all started years ago, before you lived here," the other replied. "It is quite a story in itself. You see, Marshall and his crowd had started to develop the new residential section to the south and west. Cassidy appeared on the scene, and began to operate on his own. He was a rank outsider—only a small contractor, at the time. The silk-stocking outfit didn't like him, and started in to get him. Their chance came when he secured his first big contract, with a thundering penalty attached for non-completion on a given date. The clique began to use its influence to delay shipments from iron mills and lumber yards. They hired an agitator to stir up trouble among his laborers. They shut off his line of credit at the Equity Trust Company. It was then that Marshall, who was white all the way through, rose up and spoke his mind. He said that he would fight Tom Cassidy as hard as any of them, and put him out of business if he could; but not by such methods. When he couldn't budge them, he called on Cassidy, told him the facts, and offered him all the financial accommodation necessary, through his own bank.

"I've pictured that meeting a score of times in my mind. Marshall was a real aristocrat. The family has the original Indian grant given to the first settler—a Marshall. They've always had money and place. Jim Marshall, wearing white spats and everything up to the hour, including a walking stick, knocking at the cheap three-decker; Mrs. Cassidy coming to the door, wiping her hands on her apron, and

with three or four little Cassidys clinging to her skirt; Cassidy himself, coatless, in flopping slippers, a cuddy pipe in his teeth. Gosh, I'd like to have been there! And the funny part of it is that in all the years that followed, the men apparently never met again, socially. They fought each other, bid against each other, were competitors all the way."

"And Cassidy got rich, hey?"

"That very first contract made him. After that he went big, became a political boss, got his fingers into all sorts of pies."

"And all these years that deed of Marshall's lay upon Cassidy's heart as an unpaid debt—till the right time came to pay it!"

"Yes—till the right time came. Only for him, Jim Marshall's widow would be down and out to-day. And it looks as if there's going to be a sequel," the speaker added, after a moment's pause. "I've seen young Tom—the attorney—and that pretty Marshall girl around the roof gardens two or three times lately."

It was two days later that Anna, going up to the city to do some shopping, called at the Cassidy home. After a little gossip with Mother Mary, she asked for a few words alone with her husband.

"Mr. Cassidy," said she, "you are a fraud. There isn't any such order or fraternity or society as you told me about."

Cassidy drew himself haughtily erect.

"I hope to die if there ain't!" he asseverated.

"Now, don't perjure yourself! Listen!"

Thereupon Anna related, as nearly as she could, the conversation she had overheard two nights before. Cassidy wriggled and fidgeted in great discomfort.

"Sure, now, an' a lady like yerself will not be payin' attention to idle chatter on a club piazza!"

Anna shook her head, laughter and tears in her eyes.

"There is such a fraternal order," persisted Cassidy. "To be sure, it ain't exactly organized yit, with pins and dues and by-laws and the like of that; but it's a big order, with men of ivory race and color and creed—aye, and of no creed at all, at all."

"And what is its name, then?"

Cassidy scratched his reddish-gray head. Suddenly his blue eyes lighted up.

"Its name, I'll be thinkin'," he whispered, "is the Order of Regular Guys!"

# Borrowed Fire

HOW A KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN FEUD CAME TO NEW ENGLAND

By Charles Neville Buck

Author of "The Roof Tree," "The Mountain Woman," etc.

THE story opens with the marriage of Richard Carson and Phyllis Belknap at one of the stately homes of New England. The best man—Joe Carson, brother of the groom, and by profession a lawyer in Kentucky—has never seen the bride before. During his first talk with his brother's wife she learns that the Carsons and the Belknaps belong by the ties of blood to opposite factions in the bitter feud of the Wileys and the Powells.

Phyllis takes this deeply to heart. She has been in the Kentucky mountains, and has learned to love their primitive people. It was her intercession that gained a pardon for old Lloyd Powell, a militant champion of his clan, imprisoned for slaying a Wiley. In Richard Carson's cottage on Cape Cod, where he and Phyllis have planned to spend their honeymoon, she accuses her husband of having kept a vital matter concealed from her, declares that he has married her under false pretenses, and refuses to live with him as his wife.

## IX

ANOTHER paused ensued. Each word now was a move on the chessboard of their future, and each move might decide the whole result. In each of them warring emotions met in sharp conflict. In each of them love cried out its paramount claim, and in each a righteous indignation proclaimed that love must not be stripped of its inherent dignity and independence.

At last Phyllis spoke in a sort of incredulous whisper:

"This whole matter came out of a thing that needed only a few words of honest discussion. You've made it an avalanche. You're making a war of tyranny on a woman. Very well, then, let it be war. You may keep your car in the garage. I'll telephone to the village for another."

"If it comes to that"—the voice which Carson had until now held under at least the semblance of restraint rose like a rocket to vehemence—"if it comes to that, I'll tear the telephone out. You will stay here—in your house and mine!"

She stood rigidly an arm's length from him, and into her eyes, through the incredulity that had widened them, there came an equinoctial fury to which any other anger that had ever shone in them had been mere

petulance. For an instant she gave him the picture of an Amazonian woman girded for war. For a moment it was as if, forgetful not only of their relationship but of their sexes as well, she was ready to take up his challenge in actual physical encounter. The man knew that however real the breach had been between them a moment before, it was incalculably wider and deeper now.

But the explosive flare that had made craters of her eyes paled almost at once. Carson knew that it had melted and fused all her emotions regarding him into an eclipsing contempt, against which he had no weapon. In her present mood she disdained quarrel with him. She had withdrawn beyond the range of his batteries, be they of anger or of pleading, and her voice had quieted to an arctic stillness.

"We can't talk any more," she said. "We've got past that now. It was a ring you put on my finger, you know—not a brand on my shoulder!"

She turned and walked away from him toward the house, her unbranded shoulders straight and her chin defiantly high.

Left standing there, Carson had the shaken feeling of one bewildered and deeply ashamed. His mortification was that of a man who had been publicly whipped, and who felt that he had deserved it. Publicly, because she was his whole public; deserv-

edly, because though he had believed himself right until now, he had smirched the whole integrity of his position with a sudden and brutal ferocity. He had told her that they must discuss it, and then he had flown off from conference into a tangent of passion.

Starkly miserable, he stood by the debris of all his air castles, blaming himself, yet seeking some one else to blame. As he gripped his hands at his sides, his face hardened, and he muttered to himself:

"Joe was a fool—yes, and worse! He meant no harm, of course, but he's ruined me—and that's hard to forgive!"

He went back to the house with a heavy step, and sat down at a writing table. He drew out a sheet of paper from the rack and held it for a moment in his hand, looking at it with such a sickened sense of hurt as can come from small and inanimate things—lifeless in all save the perverse power of inflicting pain.

The engraved letterhead reminded him that the first sheet of his new stationery was being devoted to the composition of a note to the expected mistress of the house, who had drawn too far away from him for speech.

Sheets of stamps lay ready for the acknowledgment of wedding gifts. Sheaves of congratulatory notes and telegrams rested under a paper weight, most of them as yet unopened. With drawn brows, Carson began to write:

Dearest—please read this.

He underscored these words, to give them the effect of a headline.

You are right. I forgot myself. It was unforgivable, yet I beg forgiveness. For both of us there is too much at stake to let an issue stand that might be cleared away. From me there will be no more such relapses into barbarism. Whether it be war or peace between us, it shall at least be civilized; and it will always be love with me.

He wrote more than that in the tense vein of a lover's plea. He was sincere enough to say that for his outburst of savage temper, and for the manner of his attack, his apologies were abject; but that in principle he stood to his guns. He begged a chance to present his argument, pledging himself to deference and courtesy.

Then he drew out a telegraph blank, upon which he expended less time and effort, dashing out the words as if they were

blows given in combat. It was addressed to Joe Carson, in the Kentucky mountain town to which Joe had gone from the wedding, for attendance upon the summer term of the circuit court. The message ran:

Phyllis refuses to stay here. I refuse to let her go. Situation serious, thanks to your intervention.

Having thus hastily vented his bitterness, he sent his note to his wife's door and sat down to await results.

It was a long and speculatively anxious period, assaulted by questions. Would she come down, or would she elect to remain *incomunicada*? How could he hold her here, if her anger outweighed all merely conventional considerations? On the other hand, would not the whole disaster be harmlessly absorbed in the solvents of time and reflection, if only he could keep her here until the delirium of her mood passed?

Finally he heard a door close quietly above him. He rose, facing the stair. She was standing at its head, in an attitude of lingering indecision, her cheeks pale and her eyes an enigma. She was coming out of the seclusion of her own room, but in what mood she would greet him he could not guess.

No smile livened the sober curve of her lips, but she inclined her head as she came down the stairs.

"I hope I'm not late for dinner," she said lightly.

Her manner was that of well adjusted poise and composure. It was as if she were a charming and gracious woman whom chance had thrown into his company, not quite a stranger, and not at all an intimate.

When his somewhat awkward silence was relieved by the announcement of dinner, her lips shaped themselves graciously into a smile; but that, the husband told himself, was rather for the benefit of Kayami, the Japanese boy who had been with him for several years, and who now stood grinning and bobbing his head in the self-importance of his new stewardship.

Her eyes traveled over the quaintly beautiful dining room—a room which they had almost prayerfully planned together. It was as if she found herself, after all, in a strange place from which the familiar spirit had escaped. Their abode was not a large and ostentatious villa, vulgarly asserting its expense, but an old Cape Cod farmhouse, roomy, rambling, characteristic, which carried from the graceful sweep of its shingled



roof to its wide-boarded floors the savor of a stanch and simple beauty.

To this inherent and inimitable charm they had added modern convenience, but nowhere had they violated the spirit of character of a house dignified by age. The broad fireplace stood white-manteled against its brick, with its quaint old Dutch oven unimpaired at its side. Against a white finish of panel and closet door, ancient hand-forged hinges, latches, and bolts stood out boldly black.

It was in summary and detail, in tone and accent, a charming room, just of proportion and authentic in character; and as this room was a little triumph of artistic restoration, so were all the other rooms under that ridgepole. It was as if the old house had come into a fulfillment of its dreams, if houses have dreams, and had realized an apotheosis in which art went hand in hand with utility.

Its preparation had meant so much to the man and woman who were to begin their life there that they had chosen it not only as a habitation, but also as the scene of their honeymoon. They had conceived it as the frame in which to set all the freshest and sweetest moments of beginning life together; but now Phyllis looked blankly about the room, chilled with a sense of inward bleakness.

Carson, sitting across from her, and feeling as if a jealously guarded frontier ran through the table, talked mechanically, and hardly knew of what he talked.

It was not until dinner had ended, and they sat in the starlight on the terrace, with a distant sparkle of water before them, that he cautiously returned to the topic upon which so much depended.

"Dearest," he said in a low voice, "I was a beast to flare up, but I was frenzied. I was suffering the agonies of Tantalus, and it was a torture that came without warning."

He paused. She sat in an attitude of sphinxlike gravity, with the light from the open door falling in a single yellow shaft that divided her background between color and dark. She made no answer.

"A man can shape his conduct," he went on earnestly, "to face death. He can even find a certain satisfaction in dying decently; but if he's prepared for a coronation, and finds a guillotine where he expected a throne—well, it's different, and harder."

"I didn't deceive you about thrones and

guillotines," she answered in a low, tired voice. "I thought it was a throne, too, and I found a husband who regarded himself as my jailer!"

He sat silent, with his face drawn, and for a time made no reply. At length he admitted slowly:

"I think you decided deliberately, and it ought to be final. There wasn't any coercion, except from your heart."

Phyllis offered him no immediate response, and the man sat forward in his chair, waiting, with a feeling of intolerable suspense. It seemed that they had come back again, at the very beginning, to the point of stalemate.

Finally she spoke, with her voice still pitched to that self-contained modulation which told him nothing of its actuating emotions.

"Then if I refuse to stay here, and you refuse to let me go, where does that leave us? We can't squabble and fight as if we were married and hostile illiterates living in a tenement, can we?"

"No—I won't make that mistake again."

"But how else will you keep me against my will? You can't always stand over me, like a sentinel on guard. I can telephone. I can send Martha out with a message or a note. I can walk to the village myself. This is a fairly thickly settled country for solitary confinement. Escape would be too easy!"

Carson bowed gravely. The dispassionate and almost ironic tone of her inquiry dampened his hope with a premonition of defeat. Somehow he could not escape the feeling that she was inherently stronger than he, that they had measured the blades of their spirits, and that his own had proved the shorter and duller.

"I recognize," he made sober admission, "that we can live together only by agreement, but that agreement has been made. I only sought to compel you, in any fashion, until you tested the permanence of a whim."

"You haven't answered my question," she reminded him. "Suppose I rise now and say to you, 'I'm leaving this house.' Would you still seek to prevent me by physical force?"

"That," he answered quietly, "might be the only way. If you were seized by an insane impulse of suicide, I might have to use force to thwart temporary unreason. I can't help feeling that this, too, is tempo-

rary unreason, and I love you too much to let it ride me down."

Phyllis sat considering his words for a space in silence. Then she inquired, still in the tone of impersonal investigation:

"If you are sure this is a passing mood, why weren't you willing to let me take my problem away and mull it over?"

"The answer to that must be honest," he told her. "You said you couldn't trust yourself to settle it here, because the habit of loving me was too strong. I wanted you to be where that habit was too strong!"

"And you think that by keeping me here, even against my will, you're sure of having my love back again?"

"I believe it firmly enough to risk my life on it—to risk angering you on it," he fervently asseverated. "There's an illusion in your mind, dear, but it can't endure long in this house where we have set the stage together for love. Elsewhere you might make a morbid problem play for it. Here you can't, and in your heart you know it!"

Phyllis shook her head, but before she spoke again she pondered his words, and when she did speak her tone was dubious.

"When I said that—about the habit of loving you being too strong here," she told him, "I was thinking only of the original quarrel—the silence which I called a lie and an infidelity. Since then you've introduced another cause of disagreement, and a bigger one. You've taken the ground that, having married me, you acquire the right to hold me not as an equal, but as a sort of slave bride. I'm afraid even a habit of loving you can't excuse that. Something like contempt came with it, Dick, and I'm afraid it came to stay."

"Yet you're afraid to test it," he urged. "You're afraid to trust yourself here and think it out, because you know that love will bowl these illusions over like tenpins."

"Afraid!" She repeated the word after him in a tone of surprise. "Why should I be afraid? Why shouldn't I welcome love, when I've planned my life for it? Why shouldn't I open the door to it, if it's there?"

Carson rose and stood before her.

"Because, without knowing it, you're mutinying against your heart. No man dying of thirst ever wanted water more than I want to take you in my arms at this moment and hold you close. I love you, and my love isn't anæmic; but I'm

not afraid that I can't subdue my longings. It's you who are afraid to face love. I'm willing to wait and risk everything on waiting. Are you?"

He paused. Receiving no reply, he rushed on.

"I challenge you to a fair fight—the prize to be my happiness and yours. I dare you to stay here for ten days, and at the end of that time to leave me or to live with me, as you see fit. I dare you to give that love a chance without strangling it abortively. During that period I shall be your lover always, but a lover claiming no rights. It shall be precisely as if our marriage were still a week off. Unless you're afraid of yourself, I dare you to do that."

"I'm not afraid of myself," she answered gravely, and perhaps a shade scornfully. "It's you who are afraid. You're afraid to let me choose my own place of deliberation. It's you who cling to an empty advantage. I warn you in all fairness that this—this contempt that I spoke of is less likely to die here than somewhere else. Here I shall feel the cowardice of your effort to keep me. Do you still insist?"

"I still insist," he unhesitatingly declared. "I'm making my fight to win you all over again. If I fail, I accept my failure—on those terms. You agree to regard this house as your abode—to go and come as you like, but not to leave it for any other habitation. You agree that this problem which has arisen between us shall be treated as confidential between us, and that you will not speak of it to any one who doesn't already know of it. You agree that as to all outsiders you are my wife, but that as between ourselves you are—what you like."

"And if I refuse to give such a parole?"

"If you refuse, you confess that you're afraid to face the situation without stacking the cards; that you don't dare spend ten days here with me, because you feel in your heart that you must select a battlefield a long way off from the enemy."

Phyllis rose. For the first time her face dropped its sphinxlike mask, but the light in her eyes was not encouraging. It was a light of indignant scorn, mingled with pity for his boastful self-assurance. She held out her hand.

"Very well," she said almost casually. "You have my parole."

"I trust it," responded the man.

"You can afford to do so," she quickly returned.

They rose and went into the house. Phyllis, seating herself at the writing desk, began perfunctorily opening the telegrams that lay there. These messages of congratulation she passed to Carson, who read them with the bite of irony in his heart—a feeling which failed to diminish as they collaborated over replies worded in the proper vein of polite appreciation.

These responses, in the order of their completion, he thrust into his pocket. When the work had gone on for about half an hour, he glanced at the clock.

"Kayami spoke of going to the village for the second showing of the movie," he suggested. "Shall I have him file these telegrams before the office closes?"

The bride nodded, and Carson went out in search of the Japanese.

It was well after midnight when Dick, obsessed with restlessness, and still pacing the lawn at the front of the house, finally saw the light go dark in Phyllis's window. For some time before that he had seen her looking out. Her face, under its heavy mass of loosened hair, had been set, not in anger, but in a wistful unhappiness that drew down one corner of her mouth and made her eyes deeply grave. To comfort her did not lie in his power, so he remained at his distance, pacing and troubled.

Now, with her windows as unlighted as closed eyes, his thoughts circled aimlessly, always returning to the disaster that had turned his happiness to gall. Joe Carson had always been dearer to him than any one save Phyllis, and though his brother had brought this trouble upon Dick, he must have done it without intent. Joe had always been willing to shoulder difficulties if by doing so he could shield his brother; and the telegram which Dick had written would distress Joe without bringing solace to any grievance of his own. What was done was done, and it would obviously be better to tear up the message unsent.

Actuated by this kindlier intent, Carson went into the house, and began running through the contents of his pockets; but the message was not there. After some minutes of perplexity he realized the obvious. That hastily scribbled message had gone into the general budget, which the Jap had filed some hours ago, and before this it would have been put on the wire. It was now too late to recall it.

Looking back, Carson realized with disquieting chagrin that the telegram was not

only unkind in tone, but indiscreet in wording. It was a message which he could not possibly have written or dispatched in anything like a normal state of mind. It had been penned in hastiness and temper. It contained his wife's name, and intrusted private news to the leaky channel of the wire. Of course, Dick defensively argued, the writing of it had been an unconsidered impulse. Even as he perpetrated the breach of decorum, he had meant to re-read and revise it before dispatching it. Now it was gone, and others less in his confidence than Joe might know its contents.

With bitter self-condemnation and self-contempt, Dick hurried out to the garage, where a branch telephone could be used without rousing any one in the house. The railway telegraph office was closed for the night, and his call for Hyannis delayed him fifteen minutes.

When he had fumed out that period in futile waiting, he dispatched a second message to Joe. This amendment was brief:

Disregard former message. I was excited. All will come right.  
Affectionately,  
Dick.

## X

ACROSS the cloud-high backbone of Hemlock Mountain—which is not a single mountain at all, but a range zigzagging for a hundred miles—Lloyd Powell had trudged until he stood near Peril Town. He paused then, looking down the forested slope, and an emotion which he did not quite understand swept over him like a tide.

His own home lay a few "measured miles" farther along, perched on a patch of clearing that seemed always about to slide down into the valley below it, like thawing snow from a steep roof. He was going there when he had passed through the town, but he did not mean to tarry there. His house would stand empty now, with no blue thread of smoke rising like a living breath from its chinked chimney, and no dog barking in welcome.

Half a mile distant from his house, and overrun with briers, through which he must fight his way, was the scrap of burial ground in which they had laid his wife and son while he was "down below."

The wife had died four years ago, and her funeral had been preached two years later, for in this mountain country obsequies do not always follow hard on death.

Sometimes two or more members of one family may die and be consigned to their graves at periods many months apart before the circuit rider reaches their creek bed or cove, and solemnizes over all at once the services that have awaited his coming.

It had been so in the family of Lloyd Powell during his five-year absence. His latest born, Little Lloyd—so called after the mountain fashion of distinguishing the junior from the senior—had gone to France. On the way, he had been allowed to come to the State prison for his father's blessing. His body had been brought back with a shipload of fallen comrades when the war ended, and later still the circuit rider held a joint service over mother and son.

It was now the old man's purpose to make, first of all, a pilgrimage to these two graves, and to the tenantless house where the boy had been born and the woman had died. That done, he would return to the house of a married daughter, who lived at the head of Little Viper Creek, and who had invited him to make his home with her.

At the verge of the town itself, accordingly, he paused, smitten through the armor of his racial stoicism by his sense of the changes that must be faced. Yet, when he crossed the toll bridge that gave entry to the place, he halted again and realized that his taking thought in advance had, after all, failed to prepare him for the facts of mutability.

The single familiar and unchanged landmark that his hungry gaze encountered was the brooding and magnificent bulk of the mountain towering above the roofs and steeples of the town. Elsewhere was total change. Along twisting streets that had in his day lain deeply mired ran sidewalks of concrete. Gone were the narrow boarded paths on which once feudal foes had met, while onlookers waited tensely to see who would quail—or, if neither surrendered the right of way, who would prove quicker to draw and fire. Now on the smooth breadth even enemies could meet and pass; but instead of enemies one saw "furriners" in riding breeches and pigskin puttees, whose talk ran glibly of "bringing in gushers," or, less boastfully, of "dusters" and "dry holes."

Ox teams yoked eight and ten deep strained along, moving the ponderous gear of oil drillers. Buildings that were new and

strange elbowed out of alignment houses that had stood since the land was young and this was its frontier.

The returning exile said nothing, but his keen eyes narrowed into hostile scrutiny. The isolation which his hermit people had held intact for almost two centuries had come into touch with oil and cupidity, and in these solvents it was disintegrating.

Lloyd Powell had saved part of the five dollars given him by the State. With this residue he sought out the telegraph office, where, at the key, sat a lowland youth with a rattish face.

"What ya want?" brusquely inquired this callow official, a pendent cigarette wabbling close to his degenerate chin.

With a grave courtesy of tone which was in itself an unrecognized reproof, the elderly man in turn put a question.

"What's hit gwine ter cost me ter send one of them telegrams ter Boston, Massachusetts, or tharabouts?"

Superciliously thumbing his tariff, the young man gave an answer, and condescended to amplify.

"That's for ten words—no more."

Lloyd Powell deliberated.

"Ten words," he repeated at length.

"Waal, I reckon mebby I'll send her two of 'em, then. Hit's right costly, but I wants ter afford hit." After a moment's pause he added gently: "I'd be right beholden ter ye ef so be ye'd pen hit fer me. My handwrite hain't so good es some."

The youth reached languidly for a pencil stub.

"Shoot!" he said, and Lloyd began.

"Hit goes ter Miss Phyllis Belknap."

From painstakingly memorized directions, he gave the address in detail.

"I've done come home"—jest put thet down," dictated Powell slowly. "'I thanks Almighty God an' you.'"

He paused, counting off the words on his fingers. Then he summarized:

"Thet makes ten, don't hit? Now I wants ter send another one ter the same lady. 'If I kin sarve ye any fashion, send me word—Lloyd Powell.'"

The young man at the key grinned and hummed a jazz fragment as he transcribed the two messages. Then he read them aloud, while Lloyd nodded his sober approval and counted out the payment.

"I wonder is the cotehouse in the same place hit used ter be at?" he inquired, when that business had been dispatched.



An impulse had come upon him to pause in the court room in which he had been tried and sentenced. It would afford him a place to sit and rest for an hour or so before resuming his journey; and to the mountaineer the diversion of attending court is a substitute for more urban pleasures.

"It's right up along this street," yawned the operator. Then, as he cut out his key, he wheeled in his chair. "Do you know a lawyer named Carson—Joe Carson?"

Lloyd Powell nodded his head slowly and as slowly responded:

"Joe Carson? I knows him—yes."

Deep in his eyes, as he spoke, shot a quick fire, but he masked it. He did not add aloud, as he was inwardly adding:

"Why wouldn't I know the lawyer thet prosecuted me an' penitentiariated me?"

A dispassionate restraint checked the sudden flare of emotion. "I reckon," he mused, still without words, "he didn't do no more then his bounden duty, nohow. I grudges an' disgusts them thet hired me prosecuted, not the lawyer they paid wages to, albeit he war a Wiley."

"Yes," he repeated non-committally, "I knows him—leastways, I uster know him."

"I got a message for him here," said the operator, rising wearily from his chair. "I wonder would you take it over, if you're going to the courthouse? He's there, and I can't leave the office myself."

The elderly man assented briefly with a nod. As the yellow paper was passed out to him, he took it face upward, for the economy of that office squandered no envelopes. His eye fell inadvertently on the name "Phyllis" with which the message began.

Having gone a little way along the street, he paused to look about him.

"I didn't 'low thet war no common name—Phyllis," he mused.

With his interest so pricked, he spelled out the message, which, like a post card, stood open to his eye, and of which he did not think as a thing hedged about with any sanctity of confidence. It was in his hand unclosed and unsealed, and he read it:

Phyllis refuses to stay here. I refuse to let her go. Situation serious, thanks to your intervention.—R. CARSON.

"Waal," he reflected, "they gives the same name ter some siv'ral diff'rent people, I reckon, an' 'tain't rightly none of my business nohow."

The coincidence of the name was quickly driven out of his mind by many clamorous impressions of change about him, as he walked like another *Rip Van Winkle* among disquieting transformations. Had he guessed that the Phyllis referred to in this telegram was the same woman to whom he had just sent his dispatch of thanksgiving, and to whom he had so simply pledged in service what was left of his life, the novel scenes about him would have been crowded roughly from his thoughts. An intimation of the truth would have made the soil of his mind fallow for a seed of tragedy; but as yet no such suspicion had been born.

In the rotunda of the courthouse he met a deputy sheriff, whom he remembered, and with whom he shook hands. These two had last met as prisoner and custodian. Now they "struck hands and made their manners."

"Is Lawyer Carson—Joe Carson—inside thar?" the old man inquired.

"He's on the bench," responded the officer. "The jedge war tuck sick this mornin', an' the lawyers agreed on him ter sot temporary. Does ye crave speech with him, Lloyd?"

The liberated convict shook his head.

"No," he said. "The man at the telegraph office guv me this message fer him, thet's all. I reckon you kin see ter hit."

When the deputy had turned back into the door of the old court room, carrying the yellow slip in his hand, Lloyd Powell remained standing for a time in the rotunda. Between walls of cracking plaster hung the yellow mustiness of age. Scars of bygone bullet-pocking were hieroglyphic records left from feud battles of older times. In the cobwebbed and rough-benched room beyond the open door, Prosecutor Jud Powell had fallen twelve years ago under a Wiley fusillade. Now a Wiley presided on the bench.

Lloyd himself had sat in that same dingy room some five years back, and had heard the verdict read:

"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty as charged in the indictment."

Here, at least, was little visible change. Already the bright colors of the recruiting posters—a decoration which had come and gone since his day—were fading, and their paper was torn. Lloyd Powell slowly and thoughtfully entered the room, walked half-way down its central aisle, and took a seat on an empty bench.

To-day's grist in the mill of human justice was a wispy-haired young man with the face almost of a half-wit. As Powell seated himself, cradling his hat on his bony knees, the twelve jurors, straggly of beard and nondescript of raiment, rose to file solemnly out to the room of legal secrecy, where they were to ballot upon the fate of the accused.

The old man who had himself been through that mill saw Joe Carson pick up and study his telegram with the air of one who gives second consideration to some matter of moment. It had been handed to the temporary judge by the court attendant, without comment, at a time when an impersonal duty engrossed him. Now the man on the bench knit his brows thoughtfully, and his mouth line tightened. With no other trespass upon the evenness of his judicial manner, he folded the yellow paper, thrust it into his breast pocket, and glanced off across the court room, which in its interval of recess buzzed to a murmur of low talk.

Then Carson's eyes met those of Lloyd Powell, whom he had once convicted, sitting half the length of the room away. The judge beckoned, and the late convict rose to move forward and stand by the shoddy rostrum.

Carson extended his hand.

"I thought it was you, Lloyd Powell," he said; "and yet I thought—"

He paused there, and the older man explained quietly:

"I've jest done been pardoned out. A kinswoman o' mine compassed hit fer me."

"A kinswoman?" repeated Carson interrogatively.

Powell once more nodded.

"Miss Phyllis Belknap," he enlightened, with pride in his voice at mention of the name. "Thet was who done hit, an' she's a plumb angel!"

The name, naturally, came as a surprise to Joe Carson, who had just read that disquieting telegram. Yet no surprise manifested itself in the well schooled expression of his eye or lip, and his next words were matter-of-fact.

"In your prosecution, Mr. Powell," he observed, "you will remember that I was associate counsel for the State—employed counsel. None the less, I congratulate you."

"I'm obleeged ter ye," responded Powell. Carson laughed.

"It's strange," he said slowly. "I only arrived here this morning, and I've just come from acting as best man at the wedding of this kinswoman of yours and my brother, Richard Carson."

"Wedding—your brother?" The old mountaineer seemed to be turning the words over vaguely in a perplexed mind. "I reckon I don't jest git yore rightful meanin'."

"I mean," explained the lawyer, "that Phyllis Belknap is now Mrs. Richard Carson, my brother's wife, and that I've just come back from the neighborhood of Boston, where they were married."

After a protracted pause, the older man said thoughtfully:

"I didn't know none of the Wileys dwelt down below. Air ye plumb shore she knowed he war a Wiley when she wedded with him?"

Carson smiled, but a shadow of uneasiness hovered about his amused eyes. Though the lips of the elder mountaineer stirred on the verge of further speech, they suddenly closed and remained silent. Suddenly into his mind there leaped a thought, or a series of thoughts which began winding and twisting themselves into a cable of grim strength; and these were no thoughts to share with a Wiley.

"Ye penitentiared me five y'ars back," remarked Lloyd Powell, changing the topic; "but I hain't niver disgusted ye fer doin' yore duty, an' now I'll bid ye farewell."

At the edge of the town Lloyd Powell halted once more. His face was set to the laurel tangles of the hills beyond and the shadows of the forest, but now it was a face that had taken on something of flint or granite.

For a moment he stood rigid; then he trembled to the palsy of some sudden and gusty agitation. The paroxysm passed like the gesture that goes before action, and the old man raised his eyes to the skies.

"She come whar I war a sulterin' in prison, an' she sot me free," he made solemn declaration. "Hit 'pears like from thet thar message she's in right sore plight now herself—an' I aims ter sot her free!"

He squatted down on his heels, as if the strength which had carried him so far had suddenly gone out of him, and his hands clenched themselves knottily at the ends of his corded wrists.

"I told her ter send fer me ef so be she needed me, but she hain't called on ter

send. She's a Powell, an' us Powells don't holler fer help. What's left of my life rightfully belongs ter her!"

He paused, then rose to his angular height. He had spoken aloud, and his words were quiet with the determination that has done with all doubt or debate. In them was none of the venom of the assassin, but all the self-dedication of the martyr who casts up the cost and accepts the penalty.

"I'll fare up thar," he went on, still talking aloud, but low-voiced. "Ef he hain't sot her free erginst the time I gits thar, then he's my man ter kill!"

## XI

PHYLLIS CARSON lay awake in her mahogany four-poster until at last a fitful sleep brought ragged dreams which savored of delirium. Her subconscious self fought through fantastic mazes to recapture a drifting and elusive love, which blackened and withered under an equally fantastic blight.

Dick Carson, in the glamour with which love endowed him, always came into the beginnings of her dreams, heralded by the thrill and ecstasy that had belonged to her weeks of anticipation; but always, with the swift and illogical change of sleep thought, the man who took her in his arms was transformed into Joe Carson, his brother, who held her in the grip of blood-stained hands. As the *Lancelot* changed to a satyr, she struggled and sought vainly to scream—to escape.

She would waken chilled with the moisture of fear, and would turn her eyes to the door beyond which her husband lay, perhaps as restless as herself, until in sheer exhaustion she drifted away again into repetitions of the nightmare. Toward morning she sank into such a heavy coma that when Martha came to waken her, she opened her eyes torpidly to wonder where she was.

She brought to the breakfast table wearily ringed eyes, and had need to approach the world of the actual through a veil of nervous oppression. Each time she spoke it was as if a heavy screen must be lifted and pushed aside.

Dick's sleep had been haunted, too, and though the bay danced under a sun that woke it to a zestful and living blue, he nodded understandingly when Phyllis rose from the table, and, pleading a slight head-

ache, suggested that a nap might bring relief.

He moved dully about the place, finding everywhere some detail of a stage set for care-free delight, and left like an empty theater with its purpose unfulfilled.

It was mid afternoon when they sat on the terrace together. Few words passed between them. Both were miserable with the amazing realization that they, who had premeditated such delight in the sharing even of trifles, should find nothing to say to each other, no rapture of companionship that had not been frosted.

Kayami brought two telegrams and handed them to Phyllis, who took them listlessly and held them for a time unopened. Doubtless they were of a piece with others that had voiced perfunctory felicitations.

At length she opened one and read it. Then she read the other. After a time the man saw that her hand rested, palm upward, in her lap, a yellow blank lying loose in its concavity, and that her lashes were tear-drenched. She had not spoken.

"What is it, dear?" he hazarded, half fearing to ask, and cursing the situation that had made constraint and tears possible on such a day.

Phyllis leaned forward and passed him the two messages.

"Who is Lloyd Powell?" he inquired gently, when he finished reading them.

She sketched for him a picture of the old man in prison. She outlined his story, which had been recited for her at the headwaters of a narrow creek, and which had livened in her the sympathy that had taken her to Frankfort, and to the Governor. Her narrative had the force of direct simplicity; and Dick, as he attentively followed it, was moved to a responsive interest. Now this old prisoner was free, and he was thanking God and Phyllis. He was offering himself to any service she might name.

"Perhaps," suggested Carson, "if there's nothing he can do for you, there's at least something we can do for him."

It was beginning to dawn on him that the fragment of her life which had been framed in her visit to the mountains had after all held a significance too deep for ignoring. Possibly her contact with primitive and simple steadfastness had stamped her with an impress deeper than his own understanding had been. Perhaps, in short, he had been a fool.

Before either of them spoke again, the sound of a light footfall on the driveway interrupted their silence. They looked up to see a stranger approaching whom neither of them remembered ever having seen before.

Phyllis rose and went abruptly into the house, with an embarrassed consciousness of tear-wet eyes, while Carson came to his feet, a little puzzled as to the identity and character of the unexpected visitor.

"You must forgive my unceremonious coming," began the man, in a voice rich and pleasing of modulation. "The fact is, I'm a beggar, though it's not my only character. Later I had meant to present myself as a guest."

Carson smiled, while his eyes held the approaching figure inquisitively. Khaki trousers and flannel shirt might have indicated the native clam digger, come to peddle his wares; but the carriage of the shoulders and head were proclamations of a more sophisticated status in life, while the voice and its inflection carried oral warranty of cultivation.

"I'm living in a windmill a quarter of a mile from here," announced the gentleman in khaki, as if living in windmills was the accepted custom of mankind. "At times I fear my practical sense is on a par with that of the celebrated Spaniard who tilted at them. Fifteen minutes ago I realized that it was time for tea. Thirteen minutes ago I realized that I had no tea in my windmill. Hence I come as a beggar, hoping there's a spare pinch of tea in your tin."

He spread his hands in a gesture of mock pleading, and through his close-trimmed beard his smile brought a somewhat dazzling flash of even teeth.

Carson laughed.

"The desperation of your plight appears to be both acute and curable," he answered. "If you'll wait a moment, I'll institute relief measures."

He turned, to find Phyllis standing on the threshold, with a hand resting lightly on the jamb and with a ghost of the old twinkle in her eyes. Curiosity had stayed her flight, and the whimsicality of the stranger had wrought a little miracle, bringing back to her sobered pupils the gay light which, until yesterday, had habitually animated them.

"Phyllis," said the husband, grateful for this momentary transformation, "this gentleman is suffering from a tea famine. He's

our first charity. I don't believe I've heard your name yet, sir, have I?"

The stranger bowed from the hips, with a touch of ceremony in his manner that is not taken for granted by the generation which prefers an accusation of rudeness to that of Victorianism. A quaint yet obviously unaffected courtliness was his as he said:

"My name is Lawrence Speed, madam, and I'm honored!"

"Why not have tea with us, Mr. Speed," she suggested, "and make one brewing do for two?"

"But," he demurred, "you've just arrived. Perhaps you're not ready to receive visitors yet." Again the gleam of fine teeth flashed through his smile, with a rather amazing effect of illuminating his face. "Neighborhood talk flows large and free in a spot like this, you know. Even a newcomer like myself learns that the large house on the hill is being prepared for 'a bride the Ricardi brings home to-day.'"

Dick Carson flushed. It occurred to him that the quotation was an unfortunate one, carrying—though the visitor could scarcely suspect it—a sinister and unpleasant analogy. Like himself, the bridegroom in the poem from which the line came had discovered, on his wedding night, that his was an unwilling bride. In Dick Carson's mind ran other words from the same source:

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut on her  
Till the final catafalque repassed.

He heard a light tinkle of laughter from Phyllis. He heard her insist, and heard the stranger accept. Perhaps Phyllis didn't remember her Browning.

Lawrence Speed might have been a youngish man prematurely grayed or an elderly fellow inveterately youthful. He proved himself a naïve and entertaining egotist. He sipped tea with epicurean delight, and played gracefully with talk, as if each subject was the specialty upon which he had posted himself. Anecdotes and names linked themselves on his tongue in a fashion that argued acquaintanceship with circles of celebrity, but his self-esteem never grew boastfully assertive. He admitted himself to be a landscape painter hardly above the level of the dilettante, and scarcely escaping the submergence of poverty.

"Come and see my windmill," he invited, as he rose to leave. "The old Cape Cod windmills are among the loveliest of



our passing landmarks, and mine is a good specimen, with salt-grayed shingles and well proportioned sweeps. Ivy clammers over it, too, and the sun sets behind it."

"The man in the windmill!" laughed Carson, when Speed had gone. "He seems to come from everywhere, and to know everything." Suddenly he broke off, then said impetuously: "I like him! He made you smile."

## XII

WHEN Lloyd Powell had constructed the major and minor premises that the woman to whom he owed his freedom was herself a prisoner, and that her jailer was a Wiley, the conclusion followed with a directness as simple as it was deadly. She must be freed from that incubus, and the duty devolved unequivocally upon himself.

Complications wound the case about in perplexing meshes, but the old man's philosophy was all of a piece with that which cut the Gordian knot. The jailer, in this instance, was also the husband. The grim call came from a distant land, where his own code was without recognition, and where he himself could expect no leniency—where, indeed, it was almost sure they would hang or electrocute him. No matter! These things embittered his duty, but in no way clouded its imperativeness.

In some fashion not quite clear to his understanding, Phyllis Belknap had been tricked into a marriage from which, at its very outset, she sought escape, and escape was denied her. Duty, imposed by gratitude, commanded him to set her free, and set her free he must.

Thus far old Lloyd Powell's reasoning ran in an unobstructed channel, but at that point arose the difficulty.

The price he could pay, and would pay, in the currency of punishment, with no spirit of haggling over the bargain. He was of such stern stuff that he could stamp his way up the scaffold steps and say:

"Keep the change!"

There was a further consideration, however. The call should be responded to at once. It was like a burning house. It would not wait. The cost of transportation—quick transportation—from Powell's corner of the Alleghenies to a place near Boston confronted him as an insurmountable obstacle.

"Why, I reckon it's thousands upon thousands of measured miles from hyar to yon," he ruminated, as, having left Peril

Town behind him, he drew near the abandoned house that had been his home. "Hit'd take me a coon's age ter journey thar on foot, an' hit 'd cost me a kittle full of money ter ride thar on the cars."

He shook his head perplexedly, but he set his jaws.

"Nonetheless," he summarized, "hit's got ter be compassed, an' I reckon the good Lord will lead me on an' show me how."

Into his reverent seriousness broke no suspicion of the irony which another might have discovered in the thought of divine guidance to murder. Divorce and death were the only solvents he knew to an unhappy marriage, and he had no divorces to dispense.

Undemonstrative, even here with no eye upon him, he stood for a while, and then knelt, at the grave of the woman with whom he had lived for more than thirty years. His lips moved noiselessly. A squirrel chattered shrilly at him from a walnut limb, and a skunk paraded with unhurried sedateness across his path.

At the newer mound of the soldier son the man paused again. His lips jerked, and his eyes, looking off to the ragged spur of the mountain top, narrowed between their wrinkled corners.

"He war a right good boy, little Lloyd was," said the father at last.

Then he turned on his heel and walked stiffly away.

Nightfall brought him to the home of his daughter Melissa, a clapboard house with gaudy yellow and blue trim, but unpainted walls. Sordid dreariness looked out from the place, as despair looks out from some defeated human faces.

The crude dignity of the square log house was wanting here, where a pitiful effort at modernity had succeeded only in destroying a native quaintness. But the gigantic green arm of the range went round the spot like the embrace of a strong and loving elbow, and an unspoiled magnificence of forestry enveloped it. In the bare-tramped yard beyond the broken stile, bee gums and bird boxes on tall poles humanized the habitation more than the effort of man had done.

Melissa, a sharp-faced slattern, came to the door as her father crossed the stile. To her untidy calico skirt clung two dirty children.

"Waal, land o' Caanan!" she made exclamation in a rasping voice. "Ef hit hain't pap hisself!"

The old man nodded and went slowly toward her, until they met, in mountain fashion, without caress or greeting.

"I've done been pardoned out," he said briefly. "I jest got hyar."

The grandchildren hung back, gazing covertly at him in half savage shyness from the protection of the skirt in which they sought to wrap themselves.

"I reckon ye wants ter see Little Lloyd's *krwaw dy gair*, don't ye?" inquired the woman, a little later.

The parrot-like pronunciation in which she had been schooled fell unmeaningly upon the ears of the man who had seen only the written words.

"Little Lloyd's what?" he inquired.

"The medal the French general pinned on him atter he'd done been slain," she amplified.

Lloyd Powell turned the trifle of bronzed metal over and over in his palm, scrutinizing it through narrowed eyes; then he handed it back. Whatever emotions were awakened by it in his aging breast made a little drama played behind a lowered curtain.

"You keep hit," he directed. "Women folks sots more store by jewelry an' sich-like things then what men does."

"Lots of triflin' loafers come struttin' home safe an' sound from the war," the woman broke out, her voice rising shrill and discordant; "but an upstandin' boy like Little Lloyd hed ter git kilt!"

"He guv his life fer what his duty stud fer," commented the father evenly, and there was no taint of the sanctimonious in his inflection. "Hit hain't none too much ter do." There was a long pause; then he added: "Hit hain't none too much, even when hit's a young life, an' a hopeful one."

The woman went about her housework, leaving the old man sitting in a decrepit chair by the doorstep, but sitting uneasily and fidgeting as if he found no ease. Often she paused and looked at him with the anxious air of one who has news to impart, and who finds its utterance difficult.

At last she came and stood before him with her hands on her hips. Her eyes had hardened defensively, and her manner had taken on a waspish, half defiant quality.

"Ye guv me a power of attorney afore they tuck ye away," she reminded him. "Ye licensed me ter sell yore farm ef so be anybody offered me a price. Waal, I sold hit fer three thousand dollars in cash money."

The old man looked up abruptly.

"Three thousand dollars!" he exclaimed almost incredulously. "Thet's a master sum of money. I didn't 'low ye could haggle hit outen nobody fer them rocky acres."

Melissa laughed bitterly.

"I didn't 'low so, nuther," she informed him. "The ground's too pore ter raise anything on, save only weeds an' cuss fights. I didn't waste no time parleyin'. I jist up an' sold, but—"

"But what, M'lissy?"

"But atter I'd done sot my name ter the deed, they found oil on them God-fer-saken hill sides. I reckon the feller knew hit war thar all the time, an' I hain't got no manner of doubt he hornswaggled us."

"Hit's kinderly hard on you an' the children," Lloyd said slowly; "but I'll make ye a free gift of half of hit, M'lissy. Fifteen hundred dollars 'll be all I'm liable ter need."

"So fur's thet's consarned," suggested his daughter, with a quick flash of cupidity in her eyes, "ef ye dwells hyar with Luke an' me, ye won't need fer skeercely nothin' at all."

"I'm farin' away on a journey," he told her non-committally. "I kain't handily tell ye nothin' more'n thet. I'm foot-loose now, an' I aims ter travel some. I aims ter make a soon start in the mornin'."

### XIII

JAKE SNOW, who wore the courtesy title of "captain" because he had once commanded a rich man's yacht on a summer cruise, came out of the door of his house and took stock of the weather indications.

"Wind sets in the west'ard," he observed sagely to no one at all. "Tide's slack. Don't know but we'll have fair weather. Don't know but we shall."

Captain Snow had not yet breakfasted, and that meant that the day was young. Roving about the radius of sight from his back door, his eye swept the tops of low pine woods, the undulations of more distant sand dunes, and, beyond them, glimpses of sapphire water. Abruptly it halted and became perplexed, troubled.

"Smoke! Well, I want to know! Smoke!" he exclaimed. Wheeling, he shouted through the door: "Just set my breakfast back on the stove, Abbie. I've got to go over to Mr. Bowes's camp before I eat. Somebody's there."

Mr. Bowes's camp was one of Captain

Jake's stewardships—a place usually empty until the cold northeasters of coming winter brought the ducks and geese down from the arctic and gunners out from town. Then live black ducks, bred in captivity, quacked raucously among the cunningly painted wooden decoys, and long lines of speeding dots in the wintry skies were lured to wheel and drop down within range of the sportsmen who stood dry-shod in ambushed trenches. Then live wild goose decoys called from their tethers and pegs on the beach, to high-honking voices near the clouds, in the Judas invitation whose acceptance spelled death in the withering range of the masked batteries.

At other times Jake went over from day to day and inspected the empty premises, overhauling the gear, repainting battered decoys, whittling out new ones, and guarding the interests of the absentee landlord.

Now Jake, who had been away from home for some three days, returned to find smoke rising from the chimney, which should be cold. It was a situation that demanded investigation.

As his battered motor dory chugged to an anchorage abreast of the building, the Cape Codder's face set itself to a stern displeasure. The eviction of trespassers on an empty stomach did not appeal to him as an exhilarating task.

"By Godfrey Hallelujah, he must be a bold scamp!" muttered Jake, as, standing in his sharpie, he sculled it shoreward with a dexterous wriggling of a single oar. "I don't know but he'll give me trouble. I don't know but he will!"

As he stepped ashore from his beached boat in water that came knee high on his hip boots, recognition broke over his face and cleared it of anxiety.

"Mr. Bowes!" he exclaimed amazedly. "Mr. Bowes! Well, I want to know! By Godfrey Hallelujah, why didn't you send me word?"

The man who had come as a refugee from a wedding where he had been miscast as an usher laughed somewhat ruefully.

"I didn't know I was coming down, Jake. It was a sudden notion."

Jake's weather-beaten face lighted enthusiastically, and he pointed up the beach, where the bulk of a grounded hull loomed under a covering of canvas.

"Just got through overhauling your power boat. She's as fresh as a June bride now, an' she runs like a gold watch. Don't

know but you'd like to la'nch her while you're here."

Bowes suffered himself to be led along the sand, and stood by while the Cape Codder, with the pride of a sculptor unveiling his masterpiece, ripped away the covering of sail cloth from a thirty-footer, gay and trim in the freshness of paint and varnish.

"There she lays," declared the old seaman, almost tenderly. "I don't know but she's better than new. I shouldn't swap her for a new one if she was mine. A lady or a child can handle her."

Bowes contemplated the little craft with surprise. To him it seemed an amazing thing that the boat he remembered as tide-battered, and almost dilapidated, should have emerged with such a phoenix reincarnation from her overhauling.

"She was shabby, and now she's beautiful, Jake," he declared heartily.

With the suddenness of inspiration, there came into his head an idea that was tintured, had he known it, with pathos.

Bowes had been miserable. He had been pitying himself, because life held no possibility of stirring him again to interest; because for him existence was beer gone stale. Now, however, his face brightened with a boyish delight new-found and zestful.

It had occurred to him to take the Mackerel Gull over and anchor her off Dick Carson's beach as a parting gift to the bride. He would once more see Phyllis, though only for a moment or two. In that quick meeting and parting he would find an agonized delight, a tortured rapture. Having made his presentation, he would go back to Boston and trust himself no longer in this neighborhood.

In Cullom Bowes had always bubbled an effervescent vitality. Even in the darkest days of the war some comrades, living in a perpetual shudder of disgust, had railed at his idiotic cheerfulness; but while they had railed at it, they had nevertheless drawn upon it, as a man with an empty canteen draws on him who is still supplied. Now, with the sun sparkling on water of jeweled color and clarity, and with a green fringe of shore line hemming and scalloping it, some persistent bubbles of that old effervescence began to rise, dancing through the stagnant dullness of his spirit.

It was early afternoon, and the Mackerel Gull was bearing him steadily toward Phyllis with an engine that purred as happily as a contented cat. Once more he was to



see the woman he loved—to hear her voice, her laughter. He would present to her an attitude of comradeship unchanged, except that from it should be censored every vestige of the lover's egotism.

Yesterday he had sworn that, under the altered status, he couldn't bear to see her again. Now his hand on the wheel was shaping a course for the shoulder of the promontory upon which he could already make out the roof of Dick Carson's house.

He told himself that to leave his boat moored or beached in idleness all summer would be an ungracious and wasteful thing. He argued the matter into complete logic as the Mackerel Gull cut through the water with a bone in her teeth and a wake streaming far astern.

A small cove, round as a bowl, and landlocked save for a tiny channel, bit into the shore line of Dick Carson's land, and Bowes steered for that diminutive harbor. A coast guard gun could have shot a line-iron across the center of the cove. On three sides of it pine woods masked a steeply sloping shore, where wild rose, bayberry, and poison ivy wove a tangle to the salt grasses of the margin. At high tide the water encroached on these grasses; but on the side upon which the house stood, and again straight across from it, lay white and enticing little beaches of smooth sand, even when the tide was at flood.

As the Mackerel Gull nosed her way, with idling engine, through the narrow entrance, Jake nodded from his place by the throttle.

"Where did you cal'late to anchor her?" he inquired. "It's lee enough anywhere in this pond."

Bowes pointed to the side of the cove on which, hidden by thick woodland, stood the house itself.

"While you're getting the mooring block out," he said, "I'll take the tender, if you don't mind. I want to row across to the other beach for a few minutes."

Somewhat suddenly, Bowes had felt a fluttering of his heart, an immense and disconcerting stage fright. Before following the little wood path to the crest, he discovered a need for sitting alone a few minutes and composing his agitation. He felt that he must get away even from Jake Snow, undisturbing as the captain was; and there on the far side, where the hull of a good-sized boat lay rotting in the sun, he could for the instant find hermitage.

He rowed away in the little sharpie, and,

having beached it silently on the gradually lifting incline, he walked slowly toward the decaying hull. He went with his head bowed and with troubled lines between his brows, and once or twice, in that freedom from watchfulness, his lips twisted without words.

"Maybe," he reflected, "it would have been better, after all, to have sent the boat over by Jake, with a note. I'm not sure I can stand seeing her—here!"

He stopped. Quite suddenly his head came up as if a fist had landed on his chin, and he stood, his expression instantly changed to one of astonishment and dismay.

Just beyond the intervening bulk of the beached boat sat Phyllis herself, alone. She was in a bathing dress, still wet from her swim across the cove; but it was none of these things that had caused Bowes to halt with such abruptness, and to change from self-pity to bewilderment.

The girl was sitting with her back half turned, and was gazing fixedly across the strip of water, so that the delicate outline of her profile stood out in cameo clearness against the rising sand beyond her.

And in the expression on that profile Bowes read no declaration of happiness. The lip corners drooped with the downward tilt of grief, and the rose-leaf delicacy of the cheeks betrayed a suggestion of pallor. The eyes, too, touched about with the smudge of weariness or strain, were telling a story of distress in a language as plain to his sympathy as words could have been.

She had not heard him, nor even seen the power boat yet. For a few moments his astonishment held him there incredulously, facing the revelation that, for some reason, she was as unhappy as himself.

He was certain, too, that it was no ephemeral unhappiness, no little sadness, like the shadow of a scurrying cloud over sunlit hills, but something which had struck deep enough to convey, in the miniature of the moment, the significance of depth and permanence.

Bowes saw all this in the unguarded confession of her face, as clearly and as suddenly as one sees things in the glare of a lightning flash through darkness. He was deeply moved. If she was in trouble, he ached to offer her comfort; but his discovery had been accidental, and without her invitation he must not seem to know her secret. To share it was her right, or to keep it.



Hordes of questions rushed overwhelmingly upon him. Had Phyllis already discovered that she had made a mistake? Great God, thought the man, while a chilling sweat broke out over him, does life juggle human matters so lightly and uncertainly as that? Had he himself missed his life's happiness by so narrow a margin of decision? And if that were true, in what quarter lay the remedy?

Of course, he told himself, that was an absurd conjecture, born only of self-centered egotism; and yet what else could have put that stamp of tragedy on the bride's face within three days of her marriage?

She stirred, and her eyes closed, then opened. She clasped her hands to her face for a moment, shuddering. Then she took them away, and caught her lower lip between her teeth.

It was too late for Bowes to escape now. She was about to rise, and must see him. He felt as guilty as an eavesdropper or a peeping *Tom*. The best he could do was to draw back out of sight and then to come upon her with the innocent appearance of having witnessed nothing. He wondered if his own face was drawn and telltale, but he got to his boat, and scraped it noisily on the sand, as if he were just grounding it. He leaned over, toying with his anchor rope.

When he rose again, Phyllis had also come to her feet and moved to the bow of the boat, where she stood facing him. She must have supposed that she had seen him first.

Once more the flair of the actress had worked its swift magic with her. As the man rose, he would not have believed that this could be the same woman. He almost doubted that the woman of a few seconds ago had any existence outside the distortion of his own biased imagination.

Phyllis was smiling on him with a clear-eyed graciousness that illuminated her face a radiant charm. Her pallor and her ringed sockets seemed to disappear as shadows do under a sudden flood of light. She stood in her clinging bathing dress, slender and upright and vital, as if her shoulders had never sagged or her lips drooped in dejection. She seemed what until just now he had always thought her—an incarnation of youthfulness who finds life generous and who faces it lightly and gratefully.

"Cullom Bowes!" she exclaimed, and her voice rang with surprised and genuine

pleasure. "Did you come up out of the water, or down out of the sky? And how did you find me here?"

"Me?" answered the man, less mercurial in his ability to change his whole aspect in the space of a breath. "Oh, I just came over like the Greeks, bearing a gift—a wooden sea horse, to carry the analogy to its end."

"Greeks with wooden horses," she laughed, "should be met coldly and with suspicion, if I remember rightly; but somehow"—she had held out both hands, and Cullom Bowes had taken them in his—"somehow I don't seem able to think of you as a menace."

"My wooden horse is tame," he assured her; "and the only warrior it will disgorge is one Captain Jake Snow, a man of peace. Moreover, the horse can stand hitched while we talk."

He paused, wondering if she had marked the avid searching of his eyes into her smiling masquerade; but she only nodded and laughed again.

"Dick," he went on with mock severity, "has bad discipline in his household. He shouldn't let you take such a long swim alone. It's close to half a mile across that cove and back."

"I ran off," she smiled, "while Dick was driving to the village. He didn't know."

"If I were Dick—" began Cullom Bowes, and paused. "It would be as easy for my shadow to run away from me as for you to escape," he had been on the point of saying. Instead, he announced sternly: "If I were Dick, I'd hide your bathing suit!"

"But you aren't Dick," she reminded him. "Besides, you're going to ferry me back, aren't you?"

"Eventually," he responded, "but on my own terms. First I'm going to sit here on the sand and talk to you—unless you're chilled after your swim."

"I'm not cold," she assured him.

For just an instant there was a hungry flash in her eyes, as if to sit here, away from others and with him, meant an interval of escape—from something. But that momentary upflaring of insurgent spirit in her face passed so speedily that, except for what he had already seen, it would have escaped him.

"What do you want to talk about?" she demanded.

"You," he answered, and the fervor of his voice gave comprehensive eloquence to the short word.

"It's so long since we met," she mockingly protested, "that I hardly know where to begin. Almost three days, isn't it?"

"Is that all?" he asked simply. "It seems more."

"Yes, doesn't it?"

Possibly the very simplicity of his tone had thrown her off her guard, made her forget the playing of her part. At all events, the three words had slipped out in a tone that was serious, perhaps even regretful.

Instantly the man flung away his manner of levity.

"Does it seem long to you, too?" he demanded searchingly.

Quickly she parried.

"Eventful days seem long, because they are full. Don't you think so?"

Bowes nodded non-committally.

"If happiness makes days long," he declared, "I hope each one of yours will be a century!"

"I know you do, Cullom, dear," she answered, and her hand rested briefly like a feather on his arm. "And I wish it for you, too."

He pulled himself together and forced his old infectious grin.

"I didn't come to hold a post mortem over myself," he declared; "but I wish you would tell me something, Phyllis. You know aged gentlemen who live in the past like to mull over faded memories. Was there ever a time, during my late candidacy, when you—" He broke off. "Well, when you were tempted to regard me as possibly available?" he went on, flushing brick red.

She stood for a little while looking across the water, and her face grew sober. He wondered whether there was hunger in it, or only sympathy. Then she nodded.

"Yes," she said frankly. "It took me quite a long time to decide, you know. Why did you ask that, Cullom?"

His face had gone pale, but again he twisted it into a grin.

"I suppose," he explained, "it's on the same principle that makes every loser want to feel he was at least in the running."

Their eyes held, and his were saying things that he had refused his tongue the right to say. Phyllis's lips stirred as if to speak, then quieted into a silent smile. She turned toward the boat, but the man caught

her hand, and his words came tumbling in a cascade of impetuosity.

"We've been talking nonsense, dear girl," he declared. "I want you to be happy. I want it above everything. You chose old Dick, and that's that! But don't forget—and this is in deadly earnest—if I can ever be of any use to you, in any way, call on me. That's an authentic offer, and there's no limit—anything up to and including murder, do you understand?"

"I understand, and even the hyperbole doesn't weaken it," she said. "Come now, let's row across and get Dick, and we'll all look at your wooden horse."

#### XIV

Bowes had gone through his moment of earthquake, and had survived it. The carefully reared and buttressed structure of his self-command had been near to falling, but it had survived the storm.

He felt that he must, in honor, take his cue from Phyllis, who had handled the misery that had unsteadied him as a magician handles a gold piece. She had palmed it, made a swift pass over it, and it had seemed to vanish into space.

His mind had no Machiavellian subtleties, and yet, in responding to the guidance of an instinct which he did not even realize, he had perhaps taken the most diplomatic course he could have chosen. He had seized the cue which she had given him to break into a moment of fervent seriousness, to offer himself, if she chose to take it so, as a confidant and champion. He had proclaimed his continued allegiance, asking nothing in return. Had she had ever so slight a wish to draw aside the curtain with which she had so swiftly masked her misery, she must have recognized the opportunity.

Had she so responded; had she let slip the half gay manner which the man recognized as spurious; had she shown herself in need of any sort of help, he would have rushed into the temple of her life from which marriage had excommunicated him, and let the consequences go hang. Her sanctum was no more sacred to him than to her; but she had guarded its doors with a smile, sentineled its entrance with laughter, and left him outside.

So the perilous moment had passed, and they were standing by his sharpie, as conventionally correct as if no threat had brushed them.

Cullom pushed the boat out, with the girl seated aft, so that he could look at her as he wielded his oars. He talked with matter-of-fact ease, just as he had led the chatter at the bride's table, but underneath he was surging on a turgid whirlpool of thought.

"That boat is a perfect beauty," declared the girl delightedly as they drew nearer it.

Bowes smiled.

"That's the aforesaid wooden sea horse brought by the Greek, Cullom Cullomides," he prattled with his good-natured grin. "After all," he was saying to himself, "this business of marriage is a funny proposition. There isn't any other contract under heaven that ties its parties up so tight and gives them less guarantee. You take on the bargain—on the strength of a few fancy samples—with your eyes shut, and then the world sits on your neck and holds you to it."

"I think, Cullom," said Phyllis soberly, "that only a genius for kindness would have thought of doing a thing like this. You always were the most gracious and kindly soul in the world!"

"I'm Cullom Cullomides, the kind Greek boy," he ironically apostrophized. "Dick's all right," he went on, to himself. "The question is, are they suited to each other? But how would they know? How could they tell?" He halted his reverie and declared: "Well, here we are! Jake, turn out the guard, and fire the admiral's salute. Mrs. Carson, this is Captain Jake Snow."

"Pleased to meet you, ma'am," said Jake, seizing the sharpie's gunwale and holding her close. "Come aboard!"

Fifteen minutes later, while Phyllis was changing from her still damp bathing suit, Cullom Bowes was smoking a cigarette with his old chum Dick Carson on the terrace.

It seemed to the visitor that the old bone-crunching heartiness of Dick's handclasp had slackened when they met. Cullom thought, too—though he realized that his state of mind was probably coloring all his impressions now—that Dick's eyes were tired and haunted. Both men felt as if they were walking warily among trespass signs, seeking to avoid this and that, with a shadow of unadmitted embarrassment between them.

"It's great of you to let us have the Mackerel Gull, old man," declared Dick.

"It's great to see you, too. I didn't know you were nearer than Boston."

"I ran down to the shack," explained Cullom. "I'm just about to start back."

Dick felt that his old friend's appearance here just now was freighted with danger. His recent rival had met his wife alone, and had talked with her. How much of the truth had Bowes guessed?

Of course Phyllis had told nothing outright. Her parole gave Dick that assurance; but a man in love can read the small and obscure type in his lady's eyes. They can construe the quick, unguarded meanings of her gestures and manner—and in such a precarious situation small things may cause disaster.

Once again Cullom and himself might be thrown into the deadly parallel of comparison, at a time when Dick stood calamitously clouded with the prejudice of a fancied disillusionment. So a polite constraint fettered the two old friends, who had for years shared confidences and chaffed each other with affectionate affability.

Half an hour later, when the three had inspected the Mackerel Gull, Bowes took his leave. Jake had found a neighboring "quahogger" in a lumbering power dory, who volunteered to take them back. Soon the promontory was dropping astern, with Phyllis and Dick Carson, receding figures on the shore, waving their farewell.

When the explosive noisiness of the engine that took Bowes away had died to a drone at the end of a long-stretched wake across the blue of the bay, Carson turned to the woman at his side.

"Phyllis," he said, "the chance you're giving me isn't a real chance, after all. In the old days of courtship, when I came to you, I came to a welcome. It was like sunlight. A plant can bloom in sunlight. A man can show what's best in him when there's a welcome to invite it; but now—"

Her eyes did not turn toward him. They were still absently following the course of the departing boat.

"You said," she responded slowly, "that if I stayed here, where your influence was at work, I couldn't help feeling—as I felt before."

He had no answer. After a moment of silence she turned with the flash of contrition in her eyes.

"Forgive me, Dick," she begged. "I'm not withholding any chance—not consciously, at least. I'm hungry for the happiness

of a few days ago; but somehow it seems gone. Some mainspring seems broken."

## XV

JOE CARSON, sitting in his small hotel room in Peril Town, had food for thought, and the somberness of his face gave declaration that it was not a delectable repast.

From this village and the forested uplands about it he had looked at life through childish eyes, but it had been a different town then. Even in boyhood, though his blood was native and his roots of sentiment deep-set in the rocky soil, he had also known the viewpoint of the outer world.

Despite its austere disdain for the pretentious and meddling wealth of "down below," mountain life had its own little aristocracy, and into it Joe Carson had been born. His mother's branch of the Wiley family had always been moderately wealthy, and had escaped the cramping limitations which poverty imposed so generally upon the people of the hills. That mother, until her separation from her husband, had raised her children to the two lives, so that Joe had known his own remote people with a perspective which they themselves lacked—the perspective of a balanced outlook.

To his mind the men in butternut brown, who still took and kept the blood oath of the vendetta, were not unlettered barbarians lagging stagnantly behind the march of progress, but a crudely heroic race. About them hung, for him, a glamour like that of the warlike clans of Scotland who stood so long and stubbornly against the encroachments of change, defending their traditions by force of arms.

He knew that eventually the old order would be changed. He realized that this amendment would sweep away miasmas of ignorance and semipauperism, as well as a certain vital picturesqueness. It had been his early dream that when this change came, he should stand as an instrument for safeguarding his people against the dangers and the exploitation of invading capital.

Above all he loved them, and he had fought their battles in the Legislature when older adversaries in debate humorously counseled him to "tarry in Jericho until his beard should grow." In order that they might trust him, in return for his love, he sought to show them that he was no tame preacher, but a clansman whose spirit they could understand and trust.

He had seen this so-called lawless people rise with single-hearted response to the call of a war which, to their comprehensions, lay as far away as the Pleiades. He had fought along with them, and when the struggle ended he had smiled as, in places many miles from any railroad, he had seen citation ribbons on hickory shirts and heard gangling lads who used to drawl "I reckon" and "I 'low" interlard their speech with "*Oui, beaucoup*," and "I'll tell the world!"

The giantess was stirring, but even now it was with the giantess rather than her labor pains that Joe Carson's interest concerned itself.

This evening he sat in the room of the new hotel, and saw the febrile activity of an oil boom streaming through a street where he had known wild-eyed men to ride galloping with bridle reins between their teeth and pistols barking from each hand.

Carson's eyes went out over the changed panorama and rested on the crown of the lofty mountain behind the town. It loomed soot-black, gigantic, and unchanged, against a luminous pallor of moon mist.

Before the man, on the table, lay a partly finished letter, written in that pale ink which for some reason seems indigenous to country hotels. On top of a pile of legal papers rested two telegraph blanks.

Carson rose to push back his chair impatiently and pace the room with a caged restlessness, and his brows knitted in troubled abstraction. For the twentieth time, perhaps, he reread those accusing words that his brother had carelessly permitted to reach the wire:

Phyllis refuses to stay here. I refuse to let her go. Situation serious, thanks to your intervention.

The second message had attempted an assuagement of ruffled sensibilities, but it was the first that counted.

Never before, since trivial childhood quarrels, had Dick regarded it as needful to rebuke his brother. Now Dick, in effect, charged Joe with disrupting his world; and such charges could not be lightly made or retracted.

Joe's feeling for Dick had always been a sort of worship. Dick was his pattern of what a Carson might be, of what a gentleman should be, of what a man was; and yet the two brothers had not been thrown closely together in recent years. Dick, after all, was more a tradition than a fact



in Joe's life—or, perhaps, more a religion than either.

Now Joe Carson had gone to his brother's wedding and had brought about what seemed—so this hateful scrap of yellow paper told him—to be a terrible disaster, imperiling the happiness of Dick's life.

A woman who could be so easily won away from love wasn't worth any mortal heartache. Of that Joe was certain, but he was equally certain that no man enmeshed in the web of infatuation could admit the truth of it. To Dick only one thing would stand clear—obviously only one thing was standing clear—that his brother had undone him.

Joe himself could as soon have contemplated a scalding infamy as the thought of concealing his ancestry because of shame or fear. It was hard to acquit Dick of censure on that score, and yet his loyalty for his brother was cut to a pattern which could not accuse him. Here lay Joe's own dilemma of conflicting loyalties.

At all events, Dick had won love, and was losing it through him, and if a remedy lay in his power he must apply it.

To have won love was a wonderful thing. Joe realized, in an echoing emptiness of heart, how much he had missed it; how loneliness had walked with him like a shadow which always fell across his eyes. Now he was trying to write to Dick, and his letter proved more difficult of composition than an involved brief.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed to himself. "I can't tell him that the trouble with the whole explosion is that his shell is a dud!"

He returned to the table and took up his pen again.

At length he straightened up and read what he had contrived to set down.

Your two telegrams came this morning, old man. I need hardly tell you what a jolt the first gave me, or what relief came with the second. You, who have the graces I lack, must make my abject apologies to Phyllis and do what you can to set me straight. I was surprised into saying what I said, but history and fiction teem with the disasters that come of introducing one's country kin into polite society.

For you and yours I'd go the limit to bring happiness, if I could—my record to the contrary notwithstanding.

The man frowned and lighted a cigar.

"It's not a howling success," he admitted to himself, as he resumed his reading.

The first telegram was handed to me by a deputy sheriff while I was temporarily presiding

on the bench, and the machinery of the law came near skidding. It had been sent over by some chance messenger from the telegraph office.

The usual dullness of the court that day was broken by elements of personal drama and coincidence, which may interest Phyllis. Just after I had read my telegram—indeed, as it still lay on my desk—I recognized an elderly man sitting in the court room, whom I had once prosecuted for homicide, and whom I supposed to be still in prison. It was old Lloyd Powell. During a recess of court I called him up and we talked affably enough. After all, since I was only hired counsel in that case, there was no reason for any deadly grudge between us.

Joe paused and puffed reflectively at his cigar, gazing out at the peak of the sentinel mountain. At length he took up his sheets again.

The germ of drama lay in the circumstance that before we had talked five minutes, this old man told me—with a positive monomania of gratitude in his eyes—that he owed his pardon to Phyllis herself. He said that the remnant of life which she had given back to him belonged to her and that to her service he henceforth dedicated himself.

Once more the writer paused and puckered his brow. In the next paragraph he had essayed a touch of humor, with which he was not altogether pleased.

When the devoted old fanatic had taken his departure, it occurred to me to dramatize in my own mind the effect it might have had on him, had he known what lay in your telegram so close to his eye. His single track intensity of mind would be quite capable of some primitive frenzy, but his slow old eyes could have divined nothing in that time, and so we parted friends.

"It's a sad effort," meditated the writer despondently, "but I doubt if I can better it. I'll let it go as it is!"

## XVI

ALONG the decks of the Fall River boat, lying at her North River pier, rang the stentorian warning:

"All ashore that's goin' ashore!"

Down her gangplank ran a freshet of human exodus, and bucking against it came three belated passengers fighting their way upward. Two of the three appeared to be middle-aged men of affairs. Accustomed to the exigencies of travel, they fell in behind their luggage-laden porters and suffered those burden-bearers to break the way for their progress. The third man had no porter, and labored under the weight of a cheap fiber telescope. He also carried a parcel as long and awkward as a broom,

which was swathed in burlap and newspapers, and which fouled his movements like a dragging spar.

This tardy passenger was elderly, tall and rawboned, and just now he was sweating as he jostled against the impact of outflowing fellow creatures. He was palpably country-bred and unsophisticated, and was garbed in a suit of cheap and nondescript black; but he glanced comprehensively about him out of shrewdly keen eyes.

When the boat nosed out from her slip this traveler stood by the rail of the upper deck, forward. Removing his shapeless black felt hat from a head that had not long ago been shaven, he mopped his forehead with a huge handkerchief. At his roughly shod feet reposed the suit case and the long parcel—which contained a repeating rifle, an instrument in the use of which he was an artist of skill and precision.

To the unsuspecting eye, however, this part of the traveler's impedimenta might well have been some cumbersome agricultural instrument—the shaft of some farm machine, perhaps, or pruning shears of generous reach and power.

Around the tip of Battery Park the panorama of the town unrolled itself, and the boat set her course up the channel of East River toward the Sound. Here, in the light of late afternoon, before the eyes of a man who had known only ragged mountains and bleakly limiting prison walls, rose peaks of another sort—lofty peaks of masonry.

To eyes that had seen so little of a populous world, the sight must have savored of pure miracle, for the sky line of lower Manhattan was drawing its spired and turreted massiveness upward, high and thin, through a mist that softened it into ash of violet.

To any vision that picture must stand for the spirit of a colossus; but each beholder is likely to interpret it according to its relation to himself. To the young egotist of towering ambition it may mean infinite opportunity, a magnificence of promised triumph. To the tired stenographer fleeing to a brief vacation it may loom as forbidding as did Cheops's pyramid to Egypt's sweating slaves.

To the despondent and disappointed it masses itself as an unbreakable might of adversity; but to old Lloyd Powell, standing beside the rifle with which he was traveling a long way to do murder, it epitomized the remorseless power of the society he was defying. It proclaimed, like an edict

printed in iron and stone, the certainty of his own crushing in the jaws of that society's vengeance.

Yet the mountaineer gazed at it steadfastly—gazed at the staggering marvel of such a city out of eyes that had hitherto seen only "settlements." He gazed on its upflung height and bridge-webbed solidity, and passed it by, unshaken of resolve, as he would pass a milepost along his way.

In deck chairs at his back sat two urbane and obviously prosperous men, who puffed at their cigars and chatted of business affairs. Their talk was as alien, almost as incomprehensible, to Powell, as if it were being carried on in another tongue.

The sounds of the river traffic, too, blended into a strange and blatant dissonance that beat on nerves uninsulated against such assaults. For a time he stood rigid, unconscious of glances that lingered on him in amused recognition of his blending of uncouthness with an almost patriarchal dignity of bearing.

Eventually the voices at his back fell silent. The two gentlemen had gone elsewhere, and Powell turned to look across the boat to the starboard quarter. There he saw an island with great stone and brick buildings of barred windows, and figures moving about in drab uniforms. Experience told him that this was a prison. Perhaps, he vaguely reflected, it was the prison to which they would shortly consign him. He gazed at it with a morbid fascination. It was Blackwell's Island.

He had never heard its name, and yet, as the solidity of its walls and the ordered discipline of its grounds met his eye, he took in its portent and recognized its character. Custom and experience filled in the blanks of ignorance and wrote a story grimly full of comprehension.

Across the clean and salty waters churned into yeast foam, or running like liquid jade, the nostrils of remembrance caught smells that he knew—the odors of formaldehyde and lime. His ears registered again, from long and jaded memory, the sounds that go bleakly echoing through inclosures of masonry where jailed men are housed—the oppressive click of locks and metal doors; the occasional midnight wail of some unfortunate who cries out in futile desperation and beats his bars; the shuffle of feet that have lost their elasticity, and the drone of voices that suggest a partial death.

In retrospect he endured once more the caged years when lowland air, shared and polluted by other hundreds of human animals, had seemed to stifle lungs that longed for clarity and altitude and freedom. From

all this he had gained release—and now to its bleak wretchedness, or to the sterner penalty of death, he must soon return. After all, he thought, death would be preferable.

*(To be continued in the November number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

## Degrees of Temperament

A MOTION PICTURE ELECTRICIAN TELLS THE STORY OF THE BEST FILM HE EVER HELPED TO MAKE

By Jack Whitman

**I** DON'T belong to this here I-Knew-Him-When Club. I wouldn't join it under no circumstances, being a family man, and having enough to do to keep the milkman coming, and the rent collector away, without paying dues in a secret society besides.

Just the same, I can give you the straight dope on these here movie stars, and no fooling. I been closer to a lot of 'em than their maids and varlets, since I been head 'lectrician on this lot.

Believe me, they don't fool with the little guy that banks the Cooper-Hewitts round their sets, and fixes that misty effect they all hanker after in a close-up. Not them! Nobody tells a 'lectrician where to get off at. Why, say, old Dave Griffith said to me once:

"Mr. Hennessey, will you please let us have another Kleig?"

"Will you please?" Get that? Did you ever hear a director say "please" to a star? You did not! But a 'lectrician—that's different. We got a union. Without us, kid, you couldn't see these stars at all.

Take a look at those three-sheets over in front of Bill Higgins's office, will you? See what they say, reading from left to right? First you see little Billie Thompson—she's a great star, ain't she? Say, I knew her when she played bathing girls over at Max Ennett's place. Next there's Thomas Mervin. When he was plain Tommy, and going around on street cars from one film factory to another, we used to sit side by side and swap hard luck stories.

Yeah, and many a time he bummed me for the makings. Now they're getting fifteen hundred a week apiece, and they don't know I'm alive, except when they want something.

Remember when they made their big hit? It was in "The Soul Doctor"—the best picture ever made, and the only one I'd sit through twice. That was a picture! None of this hokum you see being shot all around us. None of these big sets that cost ten thousand iron men and five hundred men to build. No, sir—just a plain, everyday picture, but a picture made by a director that knew what he was doing.

Mr. George Richards—that's the man, the only director I'd call "Mr." if I was paid to do it. Why? Because, son, he was a scholar and a gentleman, or I ain't the best 'lectrician in the moving-picture business—which I am.

Maybe you remember seeing my name on "The Soul Doctor." Mr. Richards put it there himself—had a special slide made for it; and then he came and told me how much I had helped him, and how much he appreciated my work. No bunk about it, either; straight goods, every word he ever spoke.

He made "The Soul Doctor." Every darned scene of it was his work. Don't let nobody tell you different. Billie Thompson and Tom Mervin didn't have a thing to do with it; they were just puppets in his hands. It made them, though, 'cause right afterward the Superexcellent gave 'em both big contracts.

"The Soul Doctor" made more money than any other picture—I guess you know that; but let me tell you that Mr. George Richards didn't work for eight months steady on that film for the money there was in it. Not him! He did it because he wanted to leave something behind him that would tell the world what he believed. When he started it, he knew that he was a dying man; and making it killed him—that's the truth.

And, believe me, he did tell the world what he wanted to. That picture's been exhibited in every city, town, village, burg, and dump in the world since it was made, including jails, hospitals, and homes for the aged and infirm. That picture's done more good to more people than a hundred preachers could. Say, it made me cry both times I saw it, on the square; and any movie that can do that to me is some movie.

## II

BUT I started to tell you about Billie Thompson and Tom Mervin. Say, it makes me laugh to hear them talk now! Why, Tom passed here about half an hour ago, chatting with one of those dames that writes interviews for the fan magazines, and he was saying:

"When I created the rôle of *Bill Blake* in '*The Soul Doctor*'—"

When he created the rôle! Get that? Why, he didn't know what he was doing when Mr. Richards put him through his scenes. He didn't get the story at all.

Haven't I been on the side fixing my lights when Mr. Richards was ready to shoot, and haven't I heard him talking and pleading with Tom Mervin, trying to put something besides vanity into that good-looking dome of his? Tom was a dumb-bell proper! Nobody home, and no waiting list? As empty as a haunted house!

And Billie Thompson the same way. Of course, with a girl like Billie, it's different. Nobody expects a pretty girl like her to have much brains; but she didn't even have good sense. I've watched Mr. Richards rehearse her in one scene for hours at a time, working as patient as a mother, and I've seen her make the same mistakes time and time again, until I thought I could go on and act it better than she did.

And you know yourself that most of these actresses are thinking so much about their make-up, and their clothes, and the dance that evening, that they haven't time

to think about what they do in front of a camera. Most of 'em, but not all. There was Olive Rhodes—who played the third big part in "*The Soul Doctor*"—she was different; but little Billie was too happy about getting out of bathing beach comedies and into drammer to think about anything else.

She thought all she had to do was to walk across the stage, smile in that cute way she has, and she could get away with it. Well, you got to admit that in most pictures that's all a pretty girl like Billie needs to do; but not in "*The Soul Doctor*," with Mr. Richards at the megaphone.

Only he never used a megaphone, except once in a big long-shot of a mob scene, where he had to. And, unlike most of these ex-barbers and some-time bartenders that are now called directors around this lot—not naming any names, but you know who I mean—he never bawled anybody out, or raised his voice, or got excited and pulled his hair. He left the acting to the actors, and he never had a temperament parked around here anywhere.

You see, Mr. Richards had read "*The Soul Doctor*"—the book, I mean—quite a long time before he got a chance to make the picture. He always kept it in mind, thinking it over, and studying how he would produce it. I guess he read that book until he knew it almost by heart, and he had it all clear in his mind, in pictures. He saw the people in it just as they afterward went on the screen. He had made up his mind about how they looked and acted.

When he came to look around for actors and actresses he had some job. If you take a slant across this here prairie of Hollywood, you'll find a lot of pretty girls of all shapes, colors, and degrees of temperament, and a lot of men, from the kind that has their hair permanent waved to the kind that slicks it back with olive oil; but you won't find the kind of people you've been dreaming about.

Casting the picture was a tough job. There was four big parts, and a lot of little ones, you remember. Of course, it was easy to pick old Joe Gowland for the *Soul Doctor*, because he's an actor who can play 'most anything, and he has the right kind of a face. Then there was the part played by Billie Thompson, the one Tom Mervin did, and the other girl that Olive Rhodes created. Yes, she created her part, I'll grant her that—but she was different.



Mr. Richards studied every actor and actress on the Superexcellent pay roll. He watched 'em work, he watched 'em play. He studied their faces, their figures, the way they walk and talk. He had more patience than a bugologist; but he didn't find the people that could look or act as they had to act in "The Soul Doctor."

After that he began going to all the agencies, getting pictures of everybody that ever walked in front of a camera, from extras up. He must have looked at a million pictures before he came to one of little Billie that registered.

Billie told me she always thought it was her worst portrait—didn't I tell you she didn't have good sense?—because it was shot when she was all tired out from working in a slapstick comedy; but leave it to Mr. Richards. He saw in that picture a girl who could look real tired, like *Jane Abbott* had to look in "The Soul Doctor"—yeah, a girl that could look dog tired and still be pretty; so he picked her.

Billie had jumped from serious comedies to funny serials. When he called her up and told her he would like to talk to her about a part, she was over at the Lifograph studios, where the villain had just knocked her cold off a railroad trestle into a raging torrent. She was so blamed tired she must have talked like it; but Mr. Richards had a way with people, and Billie met him that night at the hotel. I guess he spotted her as a dumbbell after about two minutes' powwow, but she came closer to *Jane Abbott* than anybody else, so he signed her then and there.

Tom Mervin, at the same time, was playing everything from grand dukes to stable boys, working in stock at twenty-five a week, out at Cosmic City. He'd missed so many meals he didn't want to listen to Mr. Richards when he offered to let him have a chance at *Bill Blake*. That twenty-five every Saturday sure looked good to little Tommy them days; but Mr. Richards talked him into taking a chance.

Of course, Tommy's forgotten that now. He thinks he did it on his own. That's the way money does to some of these birds.

### III

OLIVE RHODES, like I said, was different. She wasn't working in pictures at all, but was playing cheap stock down in San Diego when she heard that Mr. Richards was going to do "The Soul Doctor." She didn't

know him, and she didn't know anything about pictures; but that girl knew a lot of other things. Among 'em, she knew the story mighty near as well as Mr. Richards himself, and she wanted to play that part; so she left the stock company and came right up here, and camped on his doorstep until he had to let her in.

Then she talked to him. He was always easy to talk to if you had anything to say; and Olive had something to say, although most times she's as quiet as a little mouse. Her and him felt alike about the story, 'cause they knew what it meant.

Well, in that first interview he signed her for the other big part, and he told her then how great it would be to have her working with him in the picture and helping him all the time.

While Olive was in his office, that first day, the doctor came in. He came to see Mr. Richards every afternoon, all the time he was making the picture, and all the time he was sick in bed afterward. Olive was a powerfully healthy girl herself, and never gave sickness a thought; but when she saw Mr. Richards get up, looking all in, and shake hands with the frowning pill roller, she suddenly felt sick herself. That's what she told me afterward.

You see, nobody knew it then, except the doc and the director, but Mr. Richards was a dying man. If he'd quit work and taken to the hills, maybe he could have lasted a little longer; but not him! He wanted to do the big thing of his life—and he did.

I guess Olive fell in love with him that day, but maybe she didn't know it. You know how the right kind of women are that way. Why, say, if I hadn't broke my arm right after I had a fight with Nora, she'd be fighting me yet, and I wouldn't be the father of my two fine lads. That's the truth!

When he had the four big parts filled, it was easy to cast the others; and soon he was ready to get everybody on the big stage and talk to 'em. He called us all together—actors, assistant directors, camera men, everybody, including me, chief 'lectrician. Did you ever see any other director do that?

And what do you suppose he did? He told us the story of the picture we were going to make, and he told it so everybody but the actors got it. Then he asked us to help him do it. He didn't spill any of this

bunk about coöperation, and then tell us how great he was. No, sir! He meant what he said, and he relied on us to work with him. After that I would have worked for him for half what I was getting from a certain retired bartender.

We started shooting right after that, and then the trouble began. Most of these hams had never worked for a regular director before—there ain't many regular ones—and they thought it would be easy. They never showed up on time; and if they did, their make-up wasn't finished, or their costumes were wrong, or the carpenters didn't build the sets right, or they weren't finished on time.

The only things that were right in that company was Olive Rhodes's acting and the 'lectrical department. Everything else was all wrong, and what Mr. Richards had to contend with would have killed a strong man or made him go nutty.

One day Tom Mervin came on in white flannel pants and a soft shirt, when the night before Mr. Richards had wasted fifteen minutes telling him that next day we would shoot a night sequence, and he'd be in soup and fish. You know what most directors would do in a case like that. Mr. Richards just smiled and told Tom all over again; and that big bone dome had the nerve to ask him why he hadn't been told before! That's only one time, but the same thing happened over and over again.

Mr. Richards carried everything in his head. Tom couldn't change neckties from day to day without him seeing it and making him change back to the clothes he started in. The same with Billie and all the rest. He saw everything, and caught all their mistakes before we wasted any film. That's 'cause he had something above his shoulders; but you know what working like that does to a man. I've seen him so weak after a day's work that the doc had to help him to his office, and he had to lay down for half an hour before he could go home.

Some of them healthy, brainless birds in the company were goofs enough to think he was being temperamental. He didn't care about that, though. He was there to make the best picture he could turn out, and the more obstacles in his way the more interesting it was.

Of course, Olive Rhodes being in the cast made it easier, because to see that slim, dark-eyed girl talking to him before or after a scene—very quiet, so Billie and the others

wouldn't get catty—was a rare thing on a picture lot. She was helping him all the time—putting her soul into it, not only when she was in front of the camera, but all the time the rest of the gang were dishing dirty gossip, shooting craps, and exchanging bootleggers' addresses.

Billie thought Olive was a nut, and the rest used to kid her about being in her first picture. They said she'd get over her enthusiasm when she'd had as much experience as they had; but I knew where that enthusiasm came from.

It wasn't because she was working in her first picture. No, sir—it came from her love for Mr. Richards.

Didn't I see her listening with shiny eyes to every word he spoke? Didn't I see her gasp one day when he was trying to show Tom Mervin how to act a scene, and got up to go through it himself, and got so excited that he almost done for himself then and there? Didn't I see her run to take hold of him, while the doctor held his other arm, when all them saps were making smart cracks about the director's temperament? I know when a woman's in love with a man, and that Rhodes girl sure was.

I remember the day he learned about it, too. That was a great day. The best scenes in the picture were made then, after weeks of rehearsing and hard work, and they went off without a hitch. Billie and Tom didn't know what they were doing. They thought it was just some more film in just another picture; but Olive knew, Mr. Richards knew, and I knew.

I got so interested I didn't hear him call for "Lights!" once, and he had to come over to me and give me a poke in the ribs to wake me up.

"Is it as good as that, Tim?" he said.

I must have stammered and blushed.

"Yes, sir," I said, "it's great stuff!"

Can you figure me saying "sir" to a director? Only to him.

Well, I never saw him healthier than that day. He was all over the place, full of pep, though anybody seeing the medico would have thought it a bad sign.

After the big sequence was shot, and Tom went back to rolling dice and Billie to flirting with a visiting star, I saw Mr. Richards walk up to Olive. She was all trembling, and her eyes were misty.

"Well, Olive, that's finished!" he said, smiling like he was sorry it was over, like it was another lap on the road he was taking.

"Oh, George!" was all Olive said; but she would have fell into his arms right there, if he hadn't started falling first.

It was no time for love, with him sick as he was, but he knew then what she meant, and it knocked him out. The pill roller ran up, and between 'em they got him to the couch in his office, with me going along to help any I could.

The doc had to give him something to stimulate his heart, after a shock like that; but pretty soon he was smiling same as usual. Olive was on the floor beside him, holding one of his hands like she'd never let go, and looking into his eyes. They didn't have to talk about it at all; they knew right there that they was made for each other. He put his arm around her, and her head fell on his shoulder, and I could see her sobbing there.

Me and the medico went outside, and I asked him about Mr. Richards.

"Not a chance in the world," said he. "He's a doomed man—unless—unless that girl—but that never happens, except in movies."

"Gwan!" I said. "A fine girl like that, loving a man, can do more good than a whole college full of you fellows."

"I wish I could believe it!" said the doctor, not at all sore at me for speaking my mind; "but he's doomed, I'm afraid."

#### IV

IN spite of what the doc told me, I never doubted the power of love in Olive Rhodes's eyes. She could cure him if anything could.

I heard her talking to him in his office there, telling him that he must get well, that she loved him, that she needed him, and the world needed him, to go on with his fine work and make more pictures like "The Soul Doctor." It was sweet to hear her say it, and I didn't mind listening, though I would have murdered the lot of those hams if they had come near just then.

I don't know which was sweeter to him—making a great picture, or knowing that its making had brought him the love of a real woman; but I do know that the rest of the picture was the easiest work he had ever done. Olive was on the set beside him all the time, taking all the work she could off his shoulders and onto her own. She didn't mind any more what the cats might say about her—that didn't matter at all, with her man needing her.

Early morning, late at night, she worked

beside him—in his office, at his home, everywhere. She codirected the rest of that picture—indeed she did. Without her and her love he couldn't have held up. I've seen him laughing like a healthy child at the end of one of those days, and telling the doctor that he'd fool him yet.

Me and the doctor got to be friends then, and he told me that it amazed him, but he was afraid it wouldn't last. He said a relapse might come any day, and then—

I offered to bet him my week's wages against his monthly fees that he was wrong; but he hoped I was right, and wouldn't bet at all.

Naturally, Olive being with him so much started the gossips to talking, and you know the ugly rumors that start and spread. She'd go home with him in his car—with the doctor there, too—and next day a dozen bums on the lot would be whispering that she wanted to be a star and was playing Mr. Richards. I busted my middle knuckle on one of them pretty boys.

The worst of it was that a long time ago, when he was no more than a boy, Mr. Richards had married a silly fluff that wanted to work in pictures. She had deserted him when he told her she couldn't act, but she hung on to the marriage certificate and got her alimony every month. Of course, he told Olive about it; but she didn't mind at all. All she knew then was that her man was in danger, and she loved him, and with the help of God she was going to make him well.

#### V

IF the doc had taken me up, I would have lost my week's money. The picture was no sooner cut and titled—with Olive doing most of the work—than the relapse came, like the doc said it might. After that Mr. Richards never got out of bed.

I went to see him every day the doc would let me, and turned down all the jobs that was offered, saying I wouldn't work for anybody else. I knew how much he suffered.

The wife he hadn't seen for five years turned up to tell him she heard he had made a big picture and got a lot of money, and couldn't he raise the ante on her alimony? Billie Thompson came and asked him to release her from her contract, because she had much better offers, and wanted to go to work. Tom Mervin did the same, insisting on seeing him when he was

sickest. Fighting mad they were, the lot of 'em, to leave the ship before it went down and to make a safe harbor for themselves—all but Olive.

When other companies came to her, after seeing the picture run off in the projection room, and offered to star her at bigger money than she had ever dreamed of before, she turned 'em down cold. She said she was under contract with Mr. Richards, and would not be free for several years.

In spite of the gossip, she stayed right there in his house and cared for him night and day. Even what his wife said all over Hollywood didn't bother her a bit. She knew where she belonged.

His wife didn't say any good of her, either—you can believe that. One day she came to the house when I was there, and tried to order Olive out. I'll never forget what Olive did to her. She sat her down in the living room, which was filled with his books and pictures and all the things he loved, and gave her the talking-to of her life. She had that funny little, vain little woman gasping for air when she got through.

"And for your comfort," she finished it off, "let me add that Mr. Richards has not and will not change his will. You will get just what you would have got had he never met me at all. The rest he will leave to charity. I expect nothing and will take nothing. Please, for his sake, don't be stupid enough to tell every one you meet that you are the wronged wife. You are not, and you know it. You never loved him, and you were never his wife except by the sanction of the law. I love him, and he loves me, but we have not wronged you—not even in your legal status. I am here simply as a nurse, because he needs me. Please have the decency to respect his kindness to you, even if you can't believe me. Of course, your allowance will go on."

There was something about Olive that the other woman couldn't get. She wasn't big enough. She went out of that house beaten, and then talked more than ever about being the wronged wife.

He never saw his great picture outside of the projection room. He knew it was good, but he didn't see what it did to the public. He didn't see them lined up for three whole blocks, waiting to get in, and he didn't see them come out with tears in their eyes and a look on their faces like the look of little kids on Christmas Day. He

never even knew about that, because he died before the critics began to rave, and before the world got down on its knees and bowed before the master.

But he died happy. Olive was beside him, holding his hand, murmuring over and over, "I love you through all eternity;" and he was smiling and dreaming about getting well.

I guess you read about the funeral. Me and Olive didn't go. It wasn't the kind of a funeral we thought he'd like. It looked more like a publicity stunt than the decent burial of a fine man. The Superexcellent took charge of it, and everybody in Hollywood turned out in fine clothes, and with many flowers in their limousines. Billie was there, of course, crying pretty, and Tom Mervin riding with her, wearing that set expression he had in the big scenes of "The Soul Doctor." All in character, see?

It wasn't two days later that the papers began to talk about Billie and Tom, instead of about the man who made the picture. As the publicity rolled their way, what was more natural than that they should demand more money? They did, and they got it—and neither of 'em has done a bit of real acting since. How could they, without him?

Olive? Oh, she left the profession. She took a few of his books, and a ring he always wore, and now she's living out in Santa Monica, very quiet—like a nun, almost. Nora and me go out to see her now and then.

Well, I got to go over and put my gang to work on the lights for an ex-bartender that thinks he's a director—not mentioning any names, but you know who I mean. See you again.

## VI

TIM HENNESSEY, by his own admission the best electrician in the entire motion-picture industry, strode off. I glanced at my watch, and saw that it was time for my interview with Miss Billie Thompson, the great film star.

I knocked at the door of her dressing room, which was opened by a suspiciously French maid. Miss Billie was terminating an interview with the representative of another magazine.

"Yes," she was saying, "that was my big opportunity—when I created the rôle of *Jane Abbott* in 'The Soul Doctor.'"

The emphasis was on the "I."



# His Jade Lady

JOHN GRAEME'S STRANGE ROMANCE, AND HOW IT ENDED

By Mella Russell McCallum

JOHN GRAEME loved her. He had never seen her, but he loved her. You say such a thing cannot be? Then you do not know. He lived only for her letters; and she, as she admitted, lived only for his. It was a perfect affair—perfect!

It had begun at a time between novels, when Graeme had needed cash. The *Times* had intimated that they might use an article on Nina Rockwell. Her statuettes had been taking the critics by storm, yet no one knew anything about her. Who was she? Where was she? She was the most popular mystery in the art world.

Her dealers, the tight-mouthed firm of Aymer & Bell, refused to give Graeme her address. Correspondence with Miss Rockwell, they said, would have to be carried on through them—it was her wish. Graeme shrugged at the eccentricity. It didn't matter to him, then, so long as he got the data for his article.

Her reply was gracious. Just what did he desire to say about her?

Anything, Graeme answered, and would she please send him a photograph? To which she replied that she hadn't a photograph "fit to send"; would he accept a water color portrait, done by herself?

Would he? Good stuff, that—something different!

Then, when the sketch came, Graeme's love sprang into being. It was a small picture, ten inches high, of a slender woman in green draperies, with a crown of black hair topped by a jade comb. Her narrow, oval face had the pallor of cream. She had a sweet, serious mouth and deep, deep eyes.

He could not make out the color of the eyes, and made bold to ask her. She replied that she regretted to admit that they were "sort of a dark green."

Well, he couldn't have wished eyes any lovelier! "My jade lady!" he called her at once.

The article was a success. She permitted him to retain the water color.

After that their correspondence became a passion. It mounted to the heights. Foolish, of course; but Graeme couldn't help it. He loved her. She loved him.

And now, at last, he was going to see her! She would be in New York on the 16th, she wrote. Would he come to her first informal tea?

He felt just a bit jealous at not being invited alone. Yet who was he? An indifferent novelist, while she was the darling of the hour. His jealousy gave way to pride.

The day came. He was in a fever. What to wear? His new brown suit, or a tried and true gray? Would his lameness be very noticeable? Would she understand that he wasn't really old—that the bullet which had slightly twisted his hip had, in some unaccountable way, also turned his hair gray?

He was thirty-seven. That is not too old for a woman in her prime. She had told him that she was twenty-eight.

Before he left his apartment he slipped her portrait into his pocket. He wanted her to sign it for him, with something—well, something personal.

Dear God, would the time ever pass? But, at last, there they were, ringing the door bell. Graeme had been picked up by a taxi bearing Gavvy Lanning, the mural painting youngster, and Olga Voronoff, who may some day make Rosina Galli look to her laurels. He had wanted to make it a pilgrimage, alone; but people were always picking him up. It was that cursed bullet!

The house was an old brown stone in the sixties, well westward—a boarding house, by every sign. Strange, thought he! The house girl sent them up to the second story front. She was an uncommonly stupid-

looking house girl, who grinned and asked if they were "the company for Miss Rockwell."

Upstairs, they were admitted again by Miss Rockwell's maid—a very large maid, with pale, crossed eyes, and thin, ash blond hair. How could any one who carried so much avoirdupois be of much use as a personal servant? Graeme told himself it was another eccentricity. Of course, Nina Rockwell wouldn't have a maid like any one else's maid!

But Graeme forgot the maid when he saw the room they entered. Such a room!

"Looks like a New England conscience on a spree," Gavvy whispered; and it did.

The hostess hadn't appeared. They could look about without being rude.

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable," the maid adjured them, in her dull monotone.

The furniture was chaste Adam and Hep-pelwhite. There was a rosewood baby grand piano. The cups on the tea table were blue-veined Copenhagen. There were lovely jars and vases, dozens of them. The rugs—there must have been twenty—were riotous with China's bluest and Persia's hottest.

The walls were covered almost to the square inch with pictures. Graeme thought he had never seen so many pictures together before, away from an exhibition. There was everything from flat-faced Madonnas to cubist planes. All good pictures—but all prints! Then there were icons and sconces and gargoyles niched in. It was a breathless sort of room.

The maid paddled back to an alcove and filled a samovar. Graeme was mad with eagerness. Where was Nina Rockwell?

Other guests came—Parker Sands, the sculptor, and Mildred Carey, with whom Sands was in love at the moment. Sands puts on and takes off love like hats. Mildred is a poet—a good poet.

They greeted one another gayly. Sands boasted a bit about a new order he had. The others congratulated him. His best model had sprained her ankle. They commiserated with him.

And still no hostess.

"Where can she be?" demanded Olga aloud.

Then the maid came up to them with a worried look.

"I can't imagine what's keeping Miss Rockwell," she said. "She was called out,

but she expected to be back long before this."

"Oh, it's quite all right," Graeme assured her. "We're all good friends, and we love to talk."

There was a mirror opposite Graeme—one of those old stationary affairs, as large as a barn door. Yes, it had been well to wear the gray suit. A man may be pardoned for wanting to appear at his best before the woman he loves—especially when she has never seen him.

They chattered. Olga described a step she was introducing at the Royal Roof.

"Stand out and show us," Gavvy commanded her. "How can we tell anything about a dance if we don't see it?"

So Olga did. She's an exquisite child, with her wide brown eyes and yellow hair. They clapped. The maid watched from the alcove.

Half an hour passed. The maid came in again.

"I've decided to go right ahead and give you people your tea," she announced. "It's what she would want me to do, I know. She'll be here, surely, before long."

"Do please," smiled Mildred. "We're famished."

The maid looked relieved, started away, then faced them again—as much as one can *face* people when one's eyes are so crossed.

"I guess I might as well tell you—it's her sick brother that's keeping her. In the hospital, he is. We came to New York to get him cured. The doctor says it will take a long time, so Miss Rockwell decided to settle down here. To-day, as bad luck would have it, he took a turn for the worse."

They expressed their sympathy.

Well, the maid got the samovar water to boiling, made excellent tea, and passed it around in the blue-veined cups. Graeme prayed she wouldn't crush one of them in her elephantine grasp. She brought in two Indian baskets, one filled with crisp sandwiches, the other with little dark cakes. She set various brands of cigarettes conveniently near.

An hour must have passed. Graeme was two persons. One of them was burning up; the other was enjoying himself, talking, eating, smoking.

The Indian baskets seemed bottomless. They ate a scandalous amount. Graeme experienced the pleasant, superior sensa-

tion of one who is in on something that the rest aren't in on. They were waiting merely to see a mysterious celebrity; he was waiting for his love.

Olga danced again. Mildred read a poem. Gavvy desecrated the beautiful piano with his irresistible jazz. Parker and Mildred one-stepped.

Olga came over beside Graeme on the divan.

"I think you're ever so much more interesting because you don't dance," she told him.

"I don't dance because I'm a cripple," he said grimly.

"Poor John!" she said. Her voice was a caress. Graeme stirred uneasily. The maid was watching. Olga was sitting awfully close. "You don't like to have me make love to you, do you?" she pouted.

"If I were your father—and I'm nearly old enough to be—I'd spank you," he said.

Olga laughed. She had a pretty laugh. The maid was smiling at their byplay. Graeme could see little wrinkles of enjoyment prick her fat cheeks. Damn it, he didn't want Nina Rockwell's maid to see him being made a fool of by a flapper!

Suddenly the telephone rang. It was in the alcove. The maid hurried toward it. What if she should trip over one of those rugs, Graeme thought? Could they ever get her up again?

They listened shamelessly.

"Yes, Miss Rockwell," the maid said. "Yes, I told them you'd feel awfully bad about it. What?" The monotone became a croak. "Critical! Operation! Oh, my God! Excuse me, but I'm that upset! The poor dear! You say the danger's past now? Thank the Lord for that! Can't leave him yet? No, of course you can't. What?"

There was quite a long pause.

"I see," the maid went on. "Show them, and give one to each. All right, Miss Rockwell, I understand. Yes, I'll tell them how sorry you are about it."

She came back and reported the message they had already heard. Then she brought out a box of small, swathed objects.

Rockwell figurines! With reverent fingers, they helped unpack them.

"Her dealers haven't even seen these," the maid explained.

Ah, those lovely, almost human things, not one over twelve inches high, cast in the baffling dark green substance that resem-

bled bronze, but was not bronze. No other sculptor could point up a diminutive statue like Nina Rockwell.

There was a stout housewife trimming a pie; the maid might have posed for it. A skating boy—a sweated, waving girl—a mother reading to a child on her lap—an old gardener with his watering pot.

"I'd give my ears to know what that metal is!" sighed Sands.

"Miss Rockwell hit on it by accident," offered the maid. "Melted up some metals dug from her own land."

How they puffed with pride! Not even Aymer & Bell knew *that*.

"Isn't there a picture of her around here?" Olga asked.

"I guess not," the maid said. "I don't know of any."

Graeme thought of his water color. He started toward the alcove.

"Anything I can get you, sir?" The maid was following closely.

"No, thank you—something in my overcoat pocket." He didn't want her great hands to touch his picture, even if they hadn't broken the cups.

The other guests had seen Graeme's portrait, but they admired it afresh. He set it on the mantel in a good light.

"Tell me," he said to the maid, "does it look like your mistress?"

"It's the picture of her," she croaked. "The darling lady! Oh, it's a shame she couldn't be here, to pass the cups with her own pretty hands, like she planned to!"

She stopped, evidently realizing that she was going it pretty strong for a servant.

"But she'll have lots more tea parties," she went on more calmly.

"For which praise God!" Graeme growled.

Olga narrowed her lids at him.

"Why, John Graeme, you're in love with Nina Rockwell! That's why you're so cross—I'll bet two pounds of candy!"

He should have taken up the wager lightly. Instead, he sat like a dummy—and blushed. Olga patted his arm.

"Poor old John!" she murmured. "No wonder he didn't want me to pet him!"

"Oh, let John alone," spoke up Mildred. "If I were a man I'd love that picture too. It's adorable!"

"I'm with you, John," said Gavvy. "Eh, Sands?"

"I am tired of pouring devotion into indifferent ears," snapped Sands. "I am

damned if John's picture isn't a serious rival to you, miss!"

He bowed viciously to Mildred.

All the time they had been circling about, admiring the dainty figurines, as they rested on the satiny surface of a wall table.

It was getting late. Mildred said they ought to go.

The maid spoke up again.

"You're each to have one of the figures to keep."

"No!" they gasped.

She picked up one and pressed it upon Sands.

"Yes, Miss Rockwell said so," she insisted. She gave one to each of the rest of them. Graeme's was the mother reading to a child. The woman's form was slender, like that in the picture. The thought made him stumble a bit on the way out.

## II

It was not until he had dined, and reached his apartment, that he realized he had forgotten the water color. In the excitement of possessing one of the figurines, and the disappointment of not seeing his hostess, he had left his beloved picture on her mantel.

His best judgment told him to wait and call for it to-morrow; but he was in no mood to heed best judgment. He dashed out to the subway.

The grinning house girl let him in.

"You're one of the gentlemen that was here to-day, ain't you?" she asked.

"I am," he said. "Is Miss Rockwell in now?"

"Yes, she is. You come just in time. She's packed and leaving, and her goods is gone a'ready. Mighty queer, to have all that stuff sent up for just one day!"

Graeme's chest constricted. He started to run up the stairs.

"Oh, my Gawd!" The girl's voice was

panicky. "I forgot! She ain't to home—honest, mister!"

A presence emerged from the rear below—the landlady.

"What mischief have you done now, Elsie? That stupid tongue of yours! Mister, you'll have to come down, please!"

But Graeme was already up. He could hear the woman scolding the now terrorized girl, then the remark:

"Well, I done my best—"

He started to knock. A sound from within checked him—a low moan. Nothing could have kept him out then!

His mind flew to the events of the afternoon—the brother lying in the hospital. Perhaps he had died!

Graeme pushed the door gently.

The big room was bare, save for typical boarding house furnishings—sofa, table, frayed Morris chair, patent rocker. He could hardly believe it was the same place where they had drunk tea from thin cups a few hours ago. It was also empty of human presence.

He tiptoed to the alcove. A strapped trunk, upended, barred his progress. He peered in.

There, sitting on the bed, rocking herself in a silent frenzy of grief, was the maid. She was hugging to her great alpaca bosom *the portrait of his jade lady!*

She didn't see him. Her eyes were blind with tears, which tracked down her round face. Ash blond locks straggled around her neck and forehead.

Suddenly she halted in her stricken weaving to and fro, blinked at the water color, and tore it in two—and two more—and again two.

"You fool, Nina Rockwell!" she muttered. "You've had your little game—all the longings of your life—in one big splurge! I hope you're satisfied!"

Graeme crept out of the house.

## IS IT NOT STRANGE?

Is it not strange  
That eyes and hair and hands and feet  
Should quicken my pulse by one heartbeat  
With every change?

Is it not strange,  
When the spark is gone which animates  
All this, still loves remain, and hates,  
Through all the change?

F. L. Montgomery



# Fate Dishes Things Out

THE ADVENTURES OF PETER PORTER—A STORY OF ADIPOSE AND AMATIVENESS

By Charlotte Mish

TO Peter had been handed one of fate's unkindest combinations. He was fat, and he was in love. Now a thin man impassioned may be ridiculous, but poor Peter was not only ridiculous—he was grotesque. His face was round, and very pink, and somewhat freckled. His round button nose was too small for even a thin face, and seemed lost in the chubby expanse surrounding it. His blue eyes were round—if the word "round" seems overworked here, it is only because there is no rounder word to describe Peter with—and looked like the eyes of a nice, fat baby. He had a wide mouth which, when he smiled—and to Peter's credit this was often—disclosed so many teeth that the observer was tempted to count them, to see if it was possible that he had more than the usual allotment.

In short, Peter Porter was funny-looking, and he knew it. Even his name was funny when you said it out loud; but he had borne his funny name and had been funny-looking for exactly twenty-eight years, three months, and ten days before he began really to mind it. This was when—well, of course it was a girl, and not merely a girl, but *the* girl.

After meeting the girl, poor Peter had felt as if he wanted to run away and hide his bulk in some remote corner. Instead of running away, however, Peter stayed; and as for the remote corner, he was always as near Dorothy Severn as he could manage to be, and Dorothy was never in remote corners. Had she ever sought one, it would have been remote no longer, for the feet of adoring young men would have worn the trail that led there flat and polished before a week was up.

Dorothy was the kind of girl you read about in sentimental novels. She was

slight and dainty, and Peter would have made about five of her. Her eyes were dancing gray, with pupils so large that they looked darker than they were. Her eyelashes were so impossibly long that her picture in the back of a magazine, captioned with "*I use Sutherland's Lovelocklash, why don't you? Simply clip and sign the coupon and inclose fifty cents,*" would have brought thirty thousand feminine pens, frantic with haste, to the point of signing on the dotted line provided.

Her face was like a flower—a wild rose—Peter thought. Imagine Peter—big, ungainly Peter, who looked about as far from sentiment as a rhinoceros—comparing a girl to a wild rose! It was awful, and he knew it; but he couldn't help it.

Not that he could have told her this poetic thought. Poor Peter was so distracted and unhappy that when he was around Dorothy he appeared even more uncouth than he actually was. With others he might be clever—at college he had some reputation as a wit. At night he might rehearse to himself, with noble and flowing eloquence of style, all the sublime and tender things he would tell her on the morrow; but when the morrow became to-day, and the imagined Dorothy the real—where now the neatly turned word, the happy phrase, the verses learned by heart? When Peter met Dorothy, they instantly deserted him. If ever that unhappy and overworked phrase, "words failed him," was needed, it is to describe Peter's condition.

Peter knew that some day he would probably have to go through the agony of being best man for some lucky devil—some one who was thin, and handsome, and all the things that Peter was not and wished he was—who would capture Dorothy. Indeed, the agony might be upon him any

day now, for the word had gone around their set that the situation couldn't last much longer—the situation being the ardent rivalry, growing daily more keen, between Freddy Colman and Jack Banks.

Each of these two young men seemed to fill Peter's miserable prophecy. They were slender and handsome and all the things that Peter was not; and one of them, it was generally conceded, though no one knew which, would eventually—why not now?—capture the lady fair.

Thus Peter was reduced to a state of abject hopelessness. "Reduced" seems hardly the scrupulous word to apply to Peter, however. Instead of growing thinner as the pangs of love gnawed at his palpitating heart, he seemed to become more and more rotund. His Turkish baths, his hated exercise, his dieting, were of no avail. Peter was fat, and fat to stay.

More than ever now he felt, as he had when he first knew the joy and agony of gazing at those dancing gray eyes, that he ought to go away; but he was held fascinated, as the moth is held by the flame. Though from Peter to a moth was a far cry, Dorothy was flamelike to the top of her auburn gold head to the tips of her dancing boots.

Though Peter could not tell his love in words, it was written in large capital letters all over his big, unhappy face when he looked at her. He adored her, and she knew it. What she thought about it, Peter didn't know. She seemed to like him, he thought, and gave him privileges she didn't allow the others; but he feared that it was just because he was so utterly harmless and insignificant in her eyes. She allowed him to take her shopping and motoring, and they went on picnics together, sometimes alone—"because I'm such a burlesque she knows she doesn't need a chaperon," he told himself bitterly.

And yet he liked it. It was nice to know that she trusted him, as she would a big brother, even if she couldn't see him in another way. It hurt, and yet the pain was more delicious than anything he knew.

The pain was keen this night. The Severns were leaving for Florida on the morrow, and the "crowd" had gathered to wish Dorothy good-by. She sat on a divan, with Freddy Colman on one side of her and Jack Banks on the other, their facial muscles sadly overworked by the strain imposed upon them in changing hard

and beady glances at each other into soft and winning smiles upon their lady. Dorothy smiled back at them impartially and gayly.

"And among those present," thought Peter bitterly, "was a large mutt, who sat across the room and stared!"

"Look at Peter!" The girls nudged one another.

"Model that and call it 'Sorrow,' Gracie," suggested a little brunette, calling forth a chorus of giggles.

"Let poor Peter alone," said Gracie. "Of course, he's rather a comic valentine, but he's a dear, and he has feelings like the rest of us."

"And there's more of him to hurt," said the other slyly. "Oh, well, Peter's a nice fellow."

"Give us a little jazz, Peter, and we'll dance," some one called.

Poor Peter was too fat to dance, but he could strike magic from a piano. His fingers, if weighty, were supple and strong, and he loved to play. It was better than just watching the others dance, at any rate. To-night, however, he arose and went to the piano a bit sulkily. Freddy and Jack were disputing about the first dance with Dorothy.

Gracie went over and stood beside Peter at the piano. She had known him since her pigtail and freckle days, and they liked each other. Gracie knew all about Peter's state of heart—though every one else did, too, for that matter.

"Well, how goes it, Peter?" she asked kindly.

Peter executed a showy run and spoke at the same time.

"No go, I guess, for me. I'm just a big, fat boob, Gracie!"

"Cheer up, Peter," she said. "Perhaps things aren't as bad as they look. You never can tell till you try."

"No, and I can't tell after I've tried, either. You know I've been trying for two years. It's just no go. I think she likes me as a sort of buffoon, package carrier, and handy man, but—"

Peter glanced around, and then gave a vicious lunge at the keys in his surge of emotion.

"Look there!" he said bitterly.

Dorothy and Jack had stopped dancing and were strolling out into the garden. Jack was a handsome fellow, tall and dark and *thin*—the italics are Peter's; and at

that moment Dorothy was looking up into his face and laughing merrily.

"How can a fellow stand it?" groaned Peter. "How can a big, fat hippo of a fellow like me stand it?"

"Cheer up, Peter," said Gracie again.

She didn't really feel that Peter had any great cause for wild hilarity. Jack surely had the odds in his favor.

## II

It was beautiful in the garden. Japanese lanterns set in the shubbery glowed like so many mellow moons, and the real old moon above looked down and smiled at their imitation of her glory—smiled, too, at the girl and boy in the garden. The air was fragrant with flower perfume. Somewhere near a night bird trilled eagerly.

To Jack the time seemed auspicious. He was visibly struggling with himself. He had something to say, but was not quite sure just how to say it. He decided to lead up to it gradually.

"The moonlight—" he began.

Dorothy cocked her head on one side.

"Listen to Peter play!" she said. "He does play wonderfully, doesn't he?"

Jack felt somewhat discomfited. Of course, Peter played nicely, but it was annoying to have such an unromantic subject as Peter intrude upon what Jack felt to be a sentimental moment. Moonlight, and flowers, and the most beautiful girl in the world—and she spoke of Peter!

Still, Jack was resourceful. Perhaps he could make use of even this subject to bring the conversation into the proper channel.

"Yes," he said. "The music makes the night quite perfect. The moonlight on your hair," he breathed deeply, "is like jewels in gold! And your eyes—"

"Now, Jack!" Dorothy shook her auburn curls. "I hope he's not going to insist on being silly," she sighed to herself; but as Jack leaned forward ardently, she knew, with the unerring instinct of her sex, that he *was* going to insist.

"Peter's playing that dandy waltz," she said aloud. "Let's go in."

She attempted to rise, but Jack caught her hand and held her there.

"Not yet, Dorothy," he pleaded. "I—I have something I want to say to you. I've tried and tried, but somehow something always seems to interfere."

Dorothy drew her hand away gently, and tripped off a few steps.

"Let's go in," she repeated.

Jack's castle began to tremble on its foundation. It was true—she wouldn't even let him tell her. Did that mean that it was Freddy?

"You don't even want to let me tell you I love you?" he asked.

"I'm sorry, Jack," said Dorothy simply.

His castle rocked.

"You mean there's no use at all?"

She shook her head. The castle tottered.

"Can't you give me a chance? Is it—is it because there's some one else? Of course, excuse my asking, but—"

Dorothy was silent for a moment. Then: "Yes, there *is* some one else," she said quietly.

The castle crumbled to earth. Evidently it *was* Freddy.

Somehow the evening didn't seem very gay. The girls were disappointed. Usually the set were jolly; to-night all the men seemed distraught and sulky. Peter was playing abominable discords for the first time; Jack was miserably bad company; Freddy, wondering if he could manage a trip to Florida soon, was preoccupied. Blessed relief, then, when Mrs. Severn came to announce a little "spread."

"You'll all have to help yourselves," she said; "because the servants, except the chauffeur, have been sent ahead to Florida, and we shall have to manage without them. Rose fixed everything before she left, though, and I think you can manage."

They all scampered around, bringing in sandwiches, ice cream, wafers, and other dainties—that is, they scampered, all but Peter. Peter would have scampered, but he was not built for it.

He felt terribly depressed and unusually awkward. He was placed beside Dorothy. This was bliss, but not bliss unalloyed.

"Enjoying yourself, Peter?" queried Dorothy, after several moments of silence between them.

"Not—not at all," stammered Peter. Horrors! "I mean yes, tremendously! Just—just to sit here—"

He wanted to say that just to sit beside Dorothy was one of life's greatest joys. Instead, he grew hopelessly confused.

"To sit here and—and eat," he went on lamely, and stopped, feeling like a hundred brands of fool rolled into one.

"Have some more ice cream? Do!"

"No, thank you," said Peter miserably. Heavens, how wonderful she was! She

was flushed from dancing, and her eyes sparkled gloriously.

"Do have some more, Peter!"

"Well—" Peter hesitated. He couldn't refuse to do anything she asked. "I couldn't refuse—er—ice cream," he said, and flushed in a way that would have made any proud tomato, seeing him, crawl under its vine and expire from jealousy.

Finally that terrible feast was over, and they all strolled back into the other room.

"Let's go out into the garden, Peter," said Dorothy.

What Peter felt was indescribable as he followed her out into the cool, fragrant air. He floated on clouds of rose petals, but could think of no words save:

"Nice out here!"

"Isn't it?" said Dorothy. "It's—it's romantic, don't you think? One could imagine all sorts of love scenes in that seat there among the roses."

"Er—yes," said Peter brilliantly.

"Let's sit there," suggested Dorothy.

So they sat, Peter devouring her with eager, helpless eyes, bursting to tell his love, but unable to utter a sound.

"I suppose all sorts of fellows have proposed to you here," he said, after a while. "Fresh boob!" he muttered inwardly. "What silly, offensive, asinine thing will I blurt out next?"

"Oh," replied Dorothy, "the right one hasn't!"

"Then life isn't over yet for me," thought Peter; "but it's got to come. Freddy or Jack, I wonder?"

For a long moment there was silence. Then Peter tried again.

"Er—" he began. "Ah—er—" Once more he broke down hopelessly. "She'll think I'm a seal in disguise," he thought miserably. "Ah—er," indeed! Intelligence and brilliance—that's me! Ugh!"

He wanted to reach out and touch Dorothy's hair—oh, how he longed to! He wanted to take her little hand in his and hold it tenderly; and he dug his hands deeper into his pockets, and scowled fiercely, lest he should.

"Big, fat fool grabbing her!" he thought. "It would scare her into convulsions. Horrors! Wish I was dead! But I wouldn't even make a pathetic-looking corpse."

The night bird called, and called again, and in a minute there came a soft answer, dimmed by distance, but unmistakably an answer. Peter shuffled his feet.

"You're going to-morrow."

"Yes, Peter."

"I—I'll miss you!"

Peter felt a glow of elation. He had got that out! He had said it, had actually uttered those words—had told her that he would miss her, and she hadn't rebuffed him.

He felt that he would suffocate with his joy when she said:

"Oh, Peter, I'll miss you, too!"

But this, of course, was what one might say to a fat, foolish brother, or anybody that one was sorry for. Dorothy was always kind. He remembered that one day he had been feeding a bedraggled, skinny little puppy on the street, where he had found it, and she had cried over the sores on its tiny, pathetic body, and had taken the little thing home. She had fed and cared for it, and had it yet. It had turned into a big, ugly dog, terrible in temper, who regarded every one—even Peter, his original friend—as a natural enemy, except Dorothy, whom he adored. Every one adored Dorothy.

Probably she was just being kind; so Peter calmed himself.

"Who's going to do all those dishes we left to-night?" he asked, at length.

He hadn't been thinking about the dishes at all, but it seemed as if some one had to say something.

"Why, I don't know, Peter," said Dorothy, rather absently, and as if she felt disappointed about something.

"She's worrying about them, I'll bet," thought Peter. Then, aloud: "Servants all gone, your mother said."

"Yes, but mother and I'll manage, I guess; though when we'll get the time I don't know. We have to pack to-night, and to-morrow we have so much last minute shopping to do—"

Peter brightened.

"Let me do 'em!" he begged. "I've had all sorts of experience, camping. Will you let me?"

"That's awfully kind and thoughtful of you, Peter," said Dorothy. "I really hate to do dishes, and it would be a great help." She thought for a moment. "I'll tell you what I'll do. When mother and I leave the house in the morning, I'll put the key in among the leaves of the fern on the front porch, and you can get it and go in any time during the afternoon. We leave on the seven o'clock evening train, but I'll be



back at the house for a few minutes about five."

"Fine!" said Peter. "I'll have them done then—count on me!"

"All right, Peter, I'll count on you. Some friends are taking the house for the summer, and it would be horrid for them to find the place full of unwashed dishes. They'll come with me at five."

"Count on me!" repeated Peter.

"You're—awfully nice," said Dorothy.

### III

THOSE last words were still lingering sweetly in his ear when Peter started out next afternoon. He walked, because he wanted the exercise. That is, he didn't want it, for he hated it, but he did it because he had not yet quite given up hope of losing weight.

As he walked, he thought. As he thought, he came to a great and terrible determination. He would propose to Dorothy. Probably she would be thrown into hysterics with laughter, but do it he would. He would follow her the next day to the Florida shore, take a walk with her on the beach, and say the fatal words. If she fainted, the water would be handy.

It might be mentioned here that whatever Peter lacked in the way of looks, he had not been stinted with money. He was the son of old Jackson Porter, and when you talked about having "as much money as old Jackson Porter," you have said about all that could be said. As Peter knew, money didn't count with Dorothy. It couldn't—she had too much of it herself.

Engrossed in his thoughts, before he realized it, Peter found himself at the house. Now to get the key and enter!

To his dismay, poor Peter had forgotten where Dorothy had told him she would put the key. He thought she had said "in the leaves of the fern on the front porch," but frantic diggings into the plant met with no success. He tried the rubber plant, and under the doormat.

"Fool!" he told himself. "Here you have a chance to do some little thing for her, and of course you fall down on it!"

Again he delved into the fern, again he ransacked the depths of the rubber plant, and again he lifted the doormat.

"She said she would count on me," he thought, dolefully; "and here I've forgotten—can any one imagine it?—actually forgotten where she said she'd put the key.

Just a little thing like washing the dishes for her, and—oh, what a boob I am!"

For a long time he sat, a dismal figure, on the front steps. At intervals he would rise, dig into the fern and the rubber plant, and peer under the doormat. He observed some one watching him from the next house, and realized that people might consider him a suspicious character.

"She'll be disappointed," thought Peter. "Perhaps—perhaps she'll be *angry*!"

In his mind he magnified his offense until it became almost a mortal sin. She would be angry, very, very angry. Very likely she would never speak to him again!

"To forget where she said she would put the key!" he thought bitterly. "Oh, why did I say she could count on me? Why did I suggest such a silly thing at all? She *will* be angry!"

Do not withhold your sympathy from the terrified passenger at sea who knows that wreck is imminent; from the new-comer in earthquake zones who feels the earth begin to quiver under his feet, and knows not when it will open and swallow him up; from the despairing dweller in the top story of a hotel, with the stairs blocked and no fire escape in sight, who sees the tongues of flame leaping upward toward him; but reserve a little for a miserable lover who begins to fear that he may incur the displeasure of his beloved.

Suddenly Peter had an inspiration. Perhaps he could find an open window!

He tried those on the porch. Then he hastened down the path at the side of the house, trying each window as he went, but with no better success.

Reaching the rear, he examined the windows closely. A rather small one, a little higher than he could reach, caught his eye, and to his delight he perceived an inch-wide opening at the bottom. The window was open, it seemed. Now to reach it!

He tried leaping, but had to admit that as a leaper he was a failure. The exertion only left him panting, and his clothes somewhat the worse for rubbing against the side of the house. Moreover, a nail driven into the wall gave him a vicious dig in the chest.

Peter pondered the situation. It occurred to him that there might be a ladder in the garage, and thither he went. Peering in through the window, he saw a small ladder in a corner. Trying the window, to his delight he found it open, and crawled through.

His delight was short-lived. Bosco, the dog before referred to, came bristling forth from some dark hiding place. Peter had never liked Bosco after the dog had outlived puppyhood, and Bosco loathed Peter. He always had to be chained when human flesh and bones were near, and now he was unchained. There was blood lust in his eye—in both eyes, in fact.

There was no arguing with Bosco, no reminding him of past favors. Peter knew it. However, he tried.

"Bosco! Nice Bosco!"

Bosco advanced a step and showed appallingly large teeth in an alarming manner. And the ladder only a step away!

"Come, come, Bosco!" murmured Peter, trying to cast one eye to the rear to see that the way was clear, and to keep one on Bosco at the same time. "Nice Bosco! Come, Bosco!"

Bosco was not nice, and was evidently insulted at being thus addressed; but coming he undoubtedly was, a step at a time. To leap, grab the ladder, and run—or to run without the ladder? Peter edged toward the window. He didn't need the ladder, anyway.

But Bosco refused to be cheated; he desired—yea, craved—human blood. He gave one ferocious lunge and landed with his teeth in Peter's trousers. He pulled, and Peter pulled, with the result that they both won, Bosco getting the piece he had set his heart and his teeth on, and setting Peter free, minus one trouser leg from the knee down.

Peter made a hasty and undignified exit, banging the window tight after him, and muttering unprintable things. Now he would have to finish the dishes before Dorothy came, and then hide behind the garage until dark. A man couldn't very well stroll down the streets in daylight minus a trouser leg, and he hadn't brought his car.

He found several large packing boxes behind the garage, and carried them back under the window that he had selected for entrance. As he piled the boxes one on the other, he saw the curtains on one of the windows of the house next door move, and observed an inquisitive and anxious eye fixed upon him.

"Let 'em stare!" he thought indignantly.

It was too late to retreat now. With the watchful eye upon him, Peter mounted the first box and thence climbed to the second. The boxes were strong, and only creaked

slightly in protest at his weight. Reaching for the window, at the same time he incautiously turned around, to see if he was still being watched.

He must have swung about too hastily, for with a horrible crash his tower of boxes toppled over, depositing him, dazed and angry, in an ignominious heap on the lap of Mother Earth. Poets often call it the soft lap of Mother Earth, but Peter struck off that adjective, replacing it with others. He pressed gingerly on his nose, which felt as if it had been broken in several places; but aside from a scratch down the center, it proved to be intact. His fat had spared him any broken bones, and there were no teeth missing.

By now, however, Peter was mad, and mad clear through. He was determined, too—determined with a firmness that would stop of nothing short of trampling down under foot women and children, and perhaps old men. He would wash those dishes! If he had to tear the house down, stone by stone, he would get in and wash those dishes!

He stacked his boxes again, and, mounting them, opened the window and stuck his head through. He started to crawl in, and got halfway through, when the pressure on his waist band grew too great. With a feeling of indignation too strong for mere words, he realized that he was too fat to go through the confounded window. Never had Peter felt his avoirdupois count against him more strongly than at this moment!

He squirmed and squirmed, but in vain. Finally he decided to retreat. Horror upon horror—even this was impossible! He realized that he was wedged there to stay until help arrived.

For a few moments he wiggled desperately and futilely; then he gave himself up to doleful contemplation.

If Dorothy should see him! The thought was too harrowing. He wondered if people ever died of sheer horror at a thought. If so, he felt that the thought of Dorothy seeing him stuck there like some monstrous chick half in, half out, of its shell, would bring on the end. But life lingered, while the beads of cold perspiration rolled down his purple cheeks.

#### IV

At this juncture he felt a hard, steel-like grip on his ankle, and a gruff voice wafted to him:

"Hey! Come down outen that!"

The relief of some one coming to his aid before Dorothy saw him made Peter almost hysterical with joy.

"Ah, angel of mercy!" he murmured.

"Come down, I say!" repeated the angel of mercy, but in no angelic tones, and the order was accompanied by a violent pinch on Peter's bruised ankle.

"Gently, brother!" Peter's voice came muffled through the window. "I would, but—"

"No back talk! I say, get down outen that window!"

Another jerk on Peter's palpitating foot. He bore it stoically.

"Pull!" he said briefly.

The pulling then began in earnest. Soon Peter, feeling as if the Woolworth Building had been removed from his middle, emerged from his cocoon, falling, with the last terrific pull, headlong upon his rescuer.

When he regained his breath, the latter got up.

"Tryin' to kill me!" he growled angrily.

"You big, fat stiff! You must weigh six hundred pounds. I'll bet every bone in my body is mashed flat!"

"You—you remind me of some one," said Peter, studying the face before him. It was not a pretty face at any time, and now it looked unusually formidable. The rescuer snorted.

"Long-lost-brother stuff, I suppose," he said. "Can it. Come on along now!"

"Whither?" asked Peter innocently.

The rescuer snorted again—more violently this time.

"Home to dear father, of course," he said. "You know father. He sits on a chair behind a big desk, and when his little sons is bad he makes 'em stay home fer a year or so!"

Peter looked bewildered.

"Home!" went on the man, chuckling at his own sparkling humor. "You know home. It has nice cement floors, and pretty bars on the windows, and fat little boys can't get out without can openers. No, sir—and can openers are strictly taboo!"

"Good Heavens!" said Peter. "You don't mean—"

"Yep, that's just what I mean! Come along!" He opened his coat to display a large, glistening star. "Tell the rest to the captain!"

"Why!" gasped Peter. "I can't—in these clothes!"

"You're a pretty sight! Gettin' to be a pretty big boy to be wearin' knee pants!"

"You see, I tore 'em! Bosco—ah!" he broke off. "Now I know why you look so familiar. You're just like that ugly mongrel!"

"I said, tell the rest to—"

"There isn't any rest. Now be a good fellow and go away, and my blessings on your head. On second thought, phone for a taxi, will you? I'll—"

"Oh, sure, a taxi! I'll phone for a taxi, all right—the kind where the seats run lengthwise!"

"Heavens!" murmured Peter. "How inconsistent the fellow is!"

He searched in his pockets for his bill fold and card case; but, as usual in emergencies, they were in another suit. However, he took a bill from his wallet and proffered it.

The man turned an ugly face on Peter.

"Tryin' to bribe me, eh? Well, don't do it agin, if you know what's good fer you. Why, you fat simp, all the money old Jackson Porter's got couldn't buy me!"

"I'm Peter Porter," said Peter.

"Oh, sure you are! My, what a pretty name you got! Seems like you must have picked it from a Mother Goose book. My name's prettier—it's John D. Well, I've asked you enough times to come along. Guess I'll have to take you."

Before Peter was aware of his intention, the man had him handcuffed, and was half dragging him across the lawn to the other house, from whence Peter had observed the eye. The man rang the doorbell, and Peter hung his head in awful shame when a woman answered it. Here was the eye, now surrounded by a mass of lemon-colored hair and a skin of somewhat the same hue.

"You put in the call, ma'am? Thanks—I got him. I'd like to use your phone."

Peter limply followed his captor across the threshold of his betrayer. There followed more agonizing minutes, and then he was marched down the path, to await the patrol wagon.

At the police station Peter was allowed the privilege of using the telephone. He tried to reach his home, but his agonized demands to Central met with a callous "No answer." He tried the office, but it was after office hours. In desperation he called Dorothy's number, hoping that her father might be at home. Dorothy herself answered the phone.

"It's—it's Peter," he said.

"Oh, hello, Peter! Have you tried to get me before? I just came in," she said. "I'm awfully sorry about the key, Peter. I forgot to put it in the fern. Did you try to get in?"

"Yes, I did," said Peter. "Is your father there?"

"Why, no, Peter."

Peter nobly withheld an unparlorish sort of exclamation.

"I'm—I'm in a little trouble," he began.

"In trouble! Oh, Peter, what is it?" she cried.

"Well, they arrested me for trying to get into your house. That woman next door, in the yellow house, saw me, and—"

"Peter! Poor, dearest Peter! I'll be right down!"

"Dorothy!" he cried, but she had hung up the receiver.

In Peter's ears the words were ringing:

"Dearest Peter!"

Hallelujah! Peter could hear birds singing, could smell roses blooming, and could hear angels caroling. As he turned from the phone, he unconsciously put his hand on the shoulder of the policeman who was waiting stolidly beside him, and murmured "Darling!"—to the man's disgust.

## V

PETER told his story, or as much of it as he could, to the captain; but by now he was soaring above mundane things, and the whole affair had become a charming adventure. Bosco seemed less ferocious, the fall from the boxes was a mere nothing, the horrible jolting ride in the "wagon" was forgotten.

"Peter, dearest Peter!" Dorothy had said.

"You see, I wanted to wash the dishes," said Peter.

"He wanted to wash the dishes!" chorled the plain-clothes man. "What these birds think up!"

In the middle of explanations there was a whirl of skirts, and Dorothy, ignoring

every one else, sped straight into Peter's arms, which by now had been freed of the handcuffs.

"Peter!" she cried. "My poor boy! Your nose is scratched! What have they done to you? Why—"

"Oh, it's all right! Just tell them I'm not a burglar, and we'll get away from here, and I'll explain everything."

"You can identify him?" asked the captain.

"I certainly can. He's Peter Porter, son of Jackson Porter. As for breaking into my home, he's my fiancé, and—"

Peter gasped. Joy was coming to him in large bunches. Of his bruises, his scratched nose, his sore eye, relics of his fall, Peter felt nothing. He only knew that he was the happiest and luckiest fellow in the world as he walked out with Dorothy and climbed into her car, which was waiting at the curb.

After giving an order to the negro chauffeur, Dorothy leaned back cozily in Peter's arms.

"Oh, Peter!" she said. "How did it happen?"

"Why," said Peter, "you called me 'dearest,' and—"

"Oh, *that*!" said Dorothy, blushing. "Why, I've always loved you, Peter. That began a long time ago, but—my goodness, you haven't even proposed to me yet, and I've told you—"

Peter rectified his error ardently.

"What I meant was," said Dorothy, "how did you happen to get arrested and everything?"

He told her all about it. "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "Poor Peter!" she interjected at intervals.

"Those awful dishes!" she exclaimed at the end.

"Those wonderful, blessed dishes!" said Peter.

The car was closed, and the chauffeur couldn't see, but as he confided to Mandy Lou, his own "honey," later:

"It was scandalous quiet in dar fo' a mighty long time!"

## CUPID, CONJURER

CUPID is a trickster, and—

Let me plainly tell—

He adds unto his sleight of hand

Sleight of heart as well!

Harold Seton



# The Man Hunt

A ROMANCE OF NEW YORK AND THE CHESAPEAKE

By Hulbert Footner

Author of "Thieves' Wit," "Country Love," etc.

PEN BROOME lives with her father in a dilapidated house, which was once a mansion, on a lonely point of land on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay. Donald Counsell, a young New York broker, making a solitary canoe trip, camps on the beach and meets the Broomes. That evening a Baltimore newspaper informs them that Counsell is wanted by the police for the murder of his partner, Collis Dongan. Pendleton Broome, Pen's father, sets off in his motor boat for Absolom's Island, the nearest village, to give information of the young man's whereabouts; but Pen, who does not believe him guilty, goes down to the beach and warns him. Counsell, stunned by the news, affirms his innocence; but the circumstantial evidence against him is so strong that Pen, to give him time to decide upon some plan of defense, shows him a hiding place in the woods where he will be safe for a while.

Pendleton Broome's message to the authorities brings upon the scene a small army of reporters and detectives, who fail to discover the missing man. Another who joins in the hue and cry is Ernest Riever, a rich New Yorker, who comes to Broome's Point on his yacht, the *Alexandra*, and offers a reward of five thousand dollars for the arrest of Counsell, against whom he seems to have a violent grudge.

Pen, meanwhile, is eagerly searching for evidence that will exculpate the accused man. A newspaper item leads her to write to a girl named Blanche Paglar, in New York, who has reported the disappearance of a gunman known as Spike Talley. Pen connects this with the murder of Collis Dongan, and asks the girl to meet her at a department store in Baltimore.

Pen takes food to Counsell at night, and one moonlight night she walks with him from his hidden camp in the woods to the river.

## XI

PEN had a hundred questions to ask as they walked back toward Donald's camp. The most trifling details of his childhood were important to her.

"Have you any photographs of yourself as a child?" she asked eagerly. "How I should love them!"

"All ages," he said lightly. Suddenly his voice became embittered. "I suppose they're in the hands of the police!"

"We'll get them back again," said Pen confidently.

He stopped in the path.

"Good God, Pen! *What is before us?* I had forgotten it!"

"You are going to clear yourself."

"But if I shouldn't be able to?"

"Whatever happens to you, I shall share it," she said quickly.

"But I've got to take care of you!"

Ignoring this, she resumed her questions, and drew him back into a lighter mood.

"Haven't you any brothers and sisters, Don?"

"No, I was an only child."

"I, too. It's unnatural. I mean to have four."

He pulled her to him.

"Oh, my Pen!" he said a little hoarsely.

"My heart almost stops beating at the thought!"

She freed herself.

"Bear!" she said. "I didn't invite you to assist me in bringing up my family!"

"You've got to have some assistance," he said wickedly.

She changed the subject.

"I suppose you've been in love dozens of times," she said.

"Not like this—only flirtations."

"Oh, the last time is always the only time," she said mockingly.

"Well, how about yourself?" he parried.

"Not a flirtation!" said Pen ruefully.

"Not the least little bit of a one—only dreams."

"The men were afraid of you," observed Don sagely. "It takes courage to make up to a girl like you!"

"Conceit!" said Pen. "Tell me about your flirtations."

"I forget," he replied warily.

"Well, the first one. You couldn't forget that."

"No, I don't mean to tell you," he said coolly. He groped for his words. "You're the only woman who ever mattered a damn to me. If you don't know that now, you will know it. It isn't that I want to make myself out any better than I am. I'm a pretty poor average sort; but I won't tell you. I have a feeling that you're the sort to bedevil me into telling you things with a laugh, and then to store them up and brood over them and magnify them."

Pen sent him a curious glance through her lashes.

"Good gracious! You're cleverer than I thought!" she said in a tone divided between mockery and pique.

By the time they got out of the woods the moon had traveled far toward the west. Now it almost hung over the taller splotch of black that marked the trees surrounding the big house.

"Every night, as soon as it grows dark," said Donald, "I come out of my hole and lean on the fence, to watch the house and wonder what you are doing inside. Why is it I never see a light in any of the windows facing this way?"

"It just happens that none of those rooms are used," Pen said. "In the main house the back drawing-room and the guest room have windows facing this way, and in the kitchen wing there is the back kitchen and two servants' rooms upstairs. After this, every night, I'll put a light in one of the servants' rooms to tell you that all is well. When it goes out, you'll know I'm starting. If it goes out and comes on again, you'll know I'm prevented from coming."

"That would be bad news," he said.

"We might get up a regular code of signals," Pen went on. "Suppose there was danger, and I couldn't come to warn you? Suppose I wanted to tell you to change your camp?"

"We should have to fix on some spot beforehand, so that you would know where to find me."

"That's the difficulty. I don't know any place safer than this. What place would be safe, if they took it into their heads to

search the woods? There is a safe place, though, that I have thought of."

"Where's that?"

"In the house itself."

"What?" he exclaimed.

"If I could once get you inside, we could snap our fingers at them."

"How about the servants?"

"I wouldn't tell them. Aunt Maria never goes upstairs. I attend to the upstairs rooms myself. The third floor of the house is never visited at all."

"Oh, Pen, I couldn't!"

"Why not?" she demanded.

"To hide behind your skirts like that!"

"I thought you were going to drop that nonsense."

"It dies hard!" he groaned.

"Well, if you're so reluctant to come to my house, where I could see you as much as I wanted," she said sorely, "I won't ask you, unless I am forced to. Listen! I'll put a light in each of the rooms over the kitchen. If you see two lights shining this way, you are to hide all your things as well as you can, and come to the house."

"Where could I meet you?"

"I won't meet you outside. It would double the risk for the two of us to try to get into the house together. Listen! Make your way over the fields, without going near the road. Give the negro cabin a wide berth. When you are abreast of the big house, strike for the evergreen hedge that bounds that side of the grounds. You'll find a gap in it, broken by the wind. You know how the porch runs around three sides of the main building. At the end of the porch, on that side, there's a rough clump of mock orange bushes. Behind the bushes you'll find a way into the cellar. That's how I go and come. I'll be waiting for you in the cellar. If I'm not there, wait till I come."

"Oh, Pen, I hate skulking!"

"I love it!" said Pen. "That is, if I know I'm in the right. It's an adventure!"

They came to the tree where they had left the grass bag hanging.

"Well—" began Pen.

Don swung her around inside his arm.

"Oh, my Pen, how can I let you go to-night?" he groaned.

"Don't kiss me any more!" she pleaded. "I don't want to be drowned again. I want to know I'm loving you!"

"But I must, before I lose you!"

She laid restraining hands on his arms.

"Listen, dear," she murmured. "There's something I want to tell you. From the very bottom of my heart it comes. I love you so much that you can make me your slave, if you wish; but you should have pity on me. You should help me to keep myself separate—for both our sakes. If sometimes I seem perverse and tricky to you, it is only because of the desperate need I have to keep something of myself back. If I become swallowed up in you, as most women do in their men, you'll tire of me. I'll lose my flavor for you. Let me give myself to you a mouthful at a time. Don't swallow me whole!"

He but dimly understood her.

"I'll try," he said, between a laugh and a groan. "You funny darling child! But how can I keep from kissing you?"

"I don't want you always to keep from it," Pen told him.

## XII

ON Tuesday morning Pen, dressed for town, was breakfasting with her father in the shabby dining room.

The elder Pendleton pushed his plate from him, and, with an ostentatiously careless air, took a packet of crisp bills from his breast pocket and began to count them. It was hard to get any change out of Pen, but this time she laid down her fork and frankly stared.

"Where did you get it?" she demanded.

Pendleton exulted in the effect he was creating. He had rehearsed an answer to the inevitable question.

"I didn't steal it, my dear."

Pen refused to be diverted.

"Where did you get it?"

"I sold some lots."

"To Mr. Riever?"

"None other."

"Oh, how could you do it?" she cried involuntarily.

"And why not, I should like to know?" he demanded, up in arms immediately.

Clearly his conscience was bad, though he appeared to have reason on his side. Pen was helplessly silent.

"I consider it an excellent stroke of business in every way," Pendleton went on, puffing a little. "It secures his interest in the railway."

"He has no interest in the railway."

"Then why should he buy the lots?"

"He's buying you!"

Pendleton gave the bills a flirt.

"Well, I didn't sell myself too cheap," he said with maddening complacency.

Pen fumed in silence. Her father began to count off some of the bills.

"I want you to take some of this," he said.

"What for?" said Pen.

"To replenish your wardrobe."

"Not a cent!" said Pen indignantly. Reflecting that she was betraying too much heat, she added: "I have plenty of clothes for down here."

"Your summer dresses that you make yourself are pretty—very pretty," said Pendleton mollifyingly; "but I'm sure you must be in want of the expensive little appurtenances of a lady's wardrobe—shoes, silk stockings, hats, parasols."

"What would I be doing with a parasol at Broome's Point?" demanded Pen, with a snort of scorn.

"A smart yachting suit would be nice," he suggested; but Pen looked at him so dangerously that he made haste to add: "But of course you know best—you know best!"

"Put the money up," said Pen brusquely.

"But, my dear!"

"I refuse to dress myself at Mr. Riever's expense. The idea is revolting!"

"You will have to have money in town to-day."

"I have a little—enough to buy a pair of white shoes, and materials to retrim my last summer's hat. That will have to do."

"I don't see why you have to go against your obvious interests," Pendleton Broome complained.

Pen looked at him levelly.

"Let's be frank with each other, dad.

If you have any notion of Mr. Riever and me making a match of it, I beg that you will put it out of your head. The idea is preposterous!"

It made him writhe to have his secret wish dragged out into the crude light like this; but he was bound to fight for it still.

"Why is it preposterous?" he demanded, bridleing. "He wouldn't be stooping to you."

"Perhaps I consider that I should be stooping!" said Pen, with her chin up.

Her father ignored it.

"It's only an accident that we are poor. Remember that your grandfather had his place at Newport when his grandfather was still swinging a pick!"

"That's only an accident, too," said Pen,

"You miss the point. The question is not altogether whether he wants me, but whether I want him."

Pendleton refused to take her seriously. "Oh, the fatal pride of the Broomes!" he murmured.

"He's a divorced man," said Pen wickedly, knowing that her father held strong views on the subject.

"We must not judge," pronounced Pendleton blandly. "Circumstances alter cases. He may have been more sinned against than sinning."

Pen smiled wryly. She did not particularly blame her father. It was at poor human nature that she was smiling. Encouraged by her silence, he went on loftily:

"Pride is an excellent thing in its way, but it becomes suicidal when you allow it to blind you to—"

Pen bluntly interrupted him.

"I wouldn't marry Mr. Riever if he was the last man on earth!"

She saw, however, that Pendleton was entirely unconvinced.

"I suppose it is useless to ask you to return that money?" she said presently.

By the way his hand closed over it, by the look of irresponsible cupidity that appeared in his eyes, she saw that it was indeed useless.

"Then it ought to be used for necessary repairs to the place," she went on. "That is, if we're going to continue to live here. The house must be painted, the roof and the porches mended; and modern implements ought to be got for the farm."

"I will consider all that," he said loftily.

"Better let me take it to town and deposit it," said Pen. "It will make too much talk if you put it in the island bank."

He shook his head obstinately.

"It will improve our credit locally."

Pen shrugged, and let the matter drop. After all, she was not directly concerned. Men must be left to follow their own blind ways, she told herself.

At eight o'clock an automobile was at the door. Riever's people, having had the worst places in the road mended at his expense, had brought this car down for his use around Broome's Point. The millionaire resented having to put foot to the common earth any more than he could help—or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that his entourage resented it.

Like all potentates, Riever was largely at the mercy of his entourage. The Alexan-

dra was crowded with "friends," secretaries, servants, and persons of undefined status, whose sole object in life lay in maintaining the owner's unacknowledged state. Three-quarters of Pen was appalled at the existence of such a situation in a democratic country, but the remaining quarter of her found it undeniably pleasant to share in his state. Everything about Riever moved with so beautiful a precision.

For instance, she was carried down to the old steamboat wharf, which had likewise been mended. As the automobile turned in front of the wharf, the speed boat drew alongside, with Riever in it. They leaped over to Absolom's Island.

As they stepped out of the boat, before them was the car to take them to town, waiting with its engine running. Pen saw at once that it was not one of the ordinary cars used to carry Riever's mail back and forth, but a vehicle imported for this occasion. It was an astonishing car of foreign make, long and rakish in line, with an immense aluminium engine hood and a smart, diminutive coupé body. In other words, it represented unimagined power to carry around two little plutocrats; the last word in luxury. The driver rode outside.

It was Pen's first ride in a superlative car. The springs were miraculous. One was but faintly aware of wheels underneath. The body swam along as smoothly as a high-bred lady, only curtsying slowly now and then to a rut. It was all slightly unreal to Pen.

As they whirled through the village, she had glimpses of the staring islanders. It was only too clear what they were thinking. When an island boy and his girl went to town together, they generally came home married.

It was a clear, fresh morning. Pen would have loved to lean back in her cushioned corner and give herself up to the flying panorama through the windows. Nowadays there are few roads left like that in our country. The prospect was of a peaceful, long-settled land, with nothing garish or raw—not a factory, not a railway, not a rich man's house the whole way; but miles of pine woods, many old farms, a sleepy village now and then, glimpses of the blue water from high land, and a rickety bridge over an arm of the bay.

Unfortunately, Riever wanted to talk. It wore Pen out to talk to him, because she couldn't be frank. Real frankness was un-



known to Riever, though he could be amusing. His eyes never lost their watchfulness, nor his lips their superficial smile.

This morning he was not amusing. For several days Pen had been aware that his temper was suffering as a result of the continued non-success of his efforts to run down Counsell. To Pen's secret dismay, he commenced to talk about it now, watching her keenly meanwhile.

"What do you think of the situation at the point?" he asked.

"How do you mean?" asked Pen.

"Counsell appears to have given us the slip."

"I must be bold," Pen told herself. "Half measures will never deceive him." To Riever she said calmly: "I hope he has."

Her companion bit his lip.

"I wish I knew what it was about murder that appeals to women's imaginations!" he sneered.

"About murder, nothing," said Pen coolly. "At least, not to this woman; but no true woman could help sympathizing with a man hunted by a pack."

"Even if he was guilty of a foul crime?"

Pen was not to be betrayed into declaring her belief in Don's innocence.

"Even if he was guilty," she said.

"Then what about justice?"

"Well, I fancy women's idea of justice differs from a man's. To kill for killing gets us nowhere."

"I thought you thought him innocent," said Riever subtly.

"How can one tell?" said Pen. "The newspapers are so contradictory."

"I haven't noticed it," said Riever. "If there's any evidence in his favor, it hasn't been brought to my attention."

Seeing that she had made a slip, Pen adroitly shifted to new ground.

"That's just it," she said. "The newspapers are so clearly prejudiced, you can't help but feel there is another side to the story."

"How do you suppose he made his getaway?" asked Riever, still watching her.

"Every yard of the shore has been searched, every native questioned."

"Perhaps he paddled across the bay," suggested Pen. "There are convenient railways over on the eastern shore."

"But we had our men there next day," said Riever; "and the canoe was not found. No, somebody must be hiding him."

"Very likely," replied Pen calmly.

"But there's the reward I offered," said Riever. "You'd think that would be tempting."

"Oh, money isn't everything to everybody," said Pen.

"You think maybe some maiden's fancy has been caught by his good looks?" he sneered.

Pen looked straight at him.

"Oh, do you think he's good-looking?" she asked, with a little air of surprise.

He was disconcerted.

"I? No! But I'm no judge. At college they seemed to think him a regular Phœbus Apollo, men and women alike."

Pen carried the war straight into the enemy's camp.

"You didn't like him at college, did you?"

"He was nothing to me one way or another," Riever said carelessly. "I scarcely ever saw him."

"Liar!" thought Pen. "I cannot quite understand your attitude," she said. "Why are you so bent on running him down? Is there an old score to settle between you two?"

In the smooth mask of his face Riever's eyes were not pleasant to see.

"No, indeed!" he replied, with a laugh. "I am not revengeful; but Dongan was my friend. I owe it to his memory."

"I appreciate that," said Pen. "Still, to give up everything, and come down here yourself—to direct the hunt personally—"

"Delehanty is in charge, not I," said Riever quickly.

Pen let it go at that.

"As for coming down here," Riever went on, "that was just an impulse. I was so shocked at the moment that I could think of nothing else. Perhaps it was foolish; but I can't say I regret it, because it has made me acquainted with you."

"You are very polite," remarked Pen.

"It's more than that," said Riever. Then he changed the subject. "You will not be sorry to see us go, I'm afraid."

A glad cry leaped to Pen's lips.

"You are going!" she almost said, but she caught it in time. "I shan't be sorry to see the last of Delehanty and his crew," she admitted.

"And the rest of us?" he asked.

"It will be hard to settle down into the old dull routine when you are gone."

"I might come back," he suggested.

"Father and I would always be happy to see you," said Pen demurely.

Meanwhile they were bowling along the State road at better than forty miles an hour, but so smoothly that Pen had no sense of great speed except when she happened to catch a glimpse of some astonished face in the road. They had a highly accomplished chauffeur at the wheel, and the heavy car held its speed up hill and down as steadily as a locomotive. Woods, fields, and villages were thrust behind them with no sense of effort.

As they drew near to Baltimore, Pen began to wonder how she was going to get rid of Riever. He saved her the trouble by saying:

"I have to go to the Hotel Bellevue for a conference. You'll keep the car, of course, and load your purchases right into it. So much easier!"

Pen would have liked to dispense with the car as well as with its owner, but did not see how that was to be accomplished plausibly. At any rate, she reflected, the chauffeur could not follow her into the stores. The main thing was to be rid of Riever; but she rejoiced too soon.

"I'm taking it for granted that you'll lunch with me at the Bellevue," he said. "We breakfasted so early that I ordered lunch for half past twelve."

This was awkward.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" said Pen. "It will be impossible."

This man was not accustomed to be denied what he wanted. The spoiled child leaped out of his eyes.

"Why?" he demanded.

"So much to do," said Pen. "This is a leisurely town—not like New York. It takes time to be waited on."

"But you've all afternoon."

Pen was patient, for her.

"But think how seldom I get to town! I couldn't take an hour or two off for lunch."

"Make it half an hour, then."

"Please excuse me to-day."

"Oh, very well," he said in a pet. "Pick me up at the Bellevue whenever you are through."

He was in a hateful temper the rest of the way. When he thought Pen was not looking at him, his eyes darted sidelong jealous glances at her. Clearly his suspicions were aroused, and he was meditating some sort of mischief. It was a catastro-

phe; but Pen did not see how she could have acted differently.

It lacked a few minutes of eleven o'clock when they reached town. Riever got out at the hotel, and Pen went on about her shopping with an anxious breast. What would he do?

She was soon informed on that score. As she proceeded from store to store, she kept her eyes open about her, and finally became aware of a man who turned up wherever she went. He was a burly individual, dressed in clothes too warm for the season, and with an expression of unconsciousness that was almost comical in its transparency. Spy was writ large on him.

Pen was a little appalled by this evidence of her adversary's power. He seemed to be able to summon his creatures out of the air. She reflected, however, that it would be easy enough for Riever to send a man from his mail car down to the shopping district to pick up the imported car. There was no other car like it.

Pen made several attempts to lose her follower in the crowds, but without avail. He looked like a fool, but he always succeeded in nosing her out, like a too faithful dog.

### XIII

At noon Pen took up her stand in front of the notion counter at Douglas's with a fast-beating heart. Outside the store she had sought to dismiss her car, saying she didn't know how long she'd be; but the chauffeur had replied that he would find a place to park near by, and would wait as long as she liked. Had he, too, been instructed not to lose her?

Inside the store she would not look, but she was horribly conscious that the burly spy was somewhere across the aisle, pretending to examine silver articles. Watched or not, she had to keep her appointment. If Blanche Paglar obeyed instructions, all might yet be well. There would be nothing strange in meeting a girl friend in a department store; but probably this girl would not look like a friend.

Nevertheless, Pen's great fear was that Blanche would not come at all. She already felt flat and despairing in prospect.

Pen could not appear to be looking for anybody. With sightless eyes she inspected the stock of notions. There were scores of little baskets displaying pins, hairpins,

fasteners, tapes, hair nets, all the multitudinous contrivances with which women keep themselves together. It is one of the busiest counters in a department store. Perspiring women elbowed her on either hand.

An exasperated voice said at her shoulder:

"If you don't want anything here, would you kindly give me room!"

Pen, in a daze, gave way. She was saying to herself:

"She'll never come. It was a wild scheme. You're only wasting your time!"

Suddenly a high-pitched, metallic voice beside her exclaimed:

"Well, of all people! How are you?"

Pen jumped as if the last thing in the world she expected was to be addressed. Half a dozen women turned around. Pen seemed to shrivel under their glances; but the other girl carried it off well. She was talking continually.

Pen got a flash of hard, bright black eyes and a brilliant, tight smile. It disconcerted her. She had expected—well, some sort of a pathetic figure. These eyes expressed an infinite sophistication that seemed to open a gulf between them.

Pen's lapse was but momentary. Out of the tail of her eye she saw a burly figure pushing across the aisle, and the emergency nerved her. With an automatic reflection of the other girl's manner, she began to talk back:

"Upon my word! Who would ever have expected to find you here?" Without changing her smile, she murmured: "We're watched. He's coming this way."

"I get you!" the other girl's eyes signaled. "How are all the folks?" she said loudly.

"Much the same as usual," replied Pen.

The burly one brushed by, his foolish eyes looking everywhere but at them, his mouth pursed up to whistle.

"Bull!" murmured the black-eyed girl, out of the corner of her mouth, when he had gone by. "Pure-bred Jersey!" Aloud she said vivaciously: "You must tell me all about everybody. Let's get out of this jam!"

With a hand under Pen's elbow, she steered her out of the press. Crossing the aisle, they struck into a side aisle, deserted for the moment. Here the man could not come close enough to overhear their talk without giving himself away completely.

They could see him loitering in the main aisle, uncertain what to do.

The black-eyed girl was an admirable actress. She kept up a running fire of questions.

"How's Alfred? And the old man? And Maud?"

Pen's spirits rose fast. It was a dangerous game, and it was fun. A genuine smile replaced the mechanical one. She rattled off some kind of answers, surprised at her own talkativeness.

Meanwhile the two were busily sizing each other up, Pen with shy glances, the other with bold ones.

Pen saw a little creature beautifully formed, very pretty, too, with petulant, doll-like features, frankly made up. The idea of the make-up was not to imitate nature, but to create an original artistic effect. She was smartly dressed in a plain black silk slip confined by a beaded girdle, an impudent little close-fitting hat, expensive gray slippers and stockings. She carried an exotic little beaded bag. She might have been anything or anybody, almost—it is so hard to tell nowadays. Certainly she did not smack of the underworld as Pen imagined it; but Pen, perhaps, was not much of a judge.

On the other hand, Pen could hardly have been mistaken for anything but what she was. There was a sort of open reticence in her, a high unaffectedness that was in her blood and could not be hidden or imitated. With all her assurance, the black-eyed girl resented it a little. Without changing her outward manner, she said:

"Well, what's the big idea, miss? I don't get you at all, so far. Are you a bull yourself?"

"No," said Pen, smiling.

"Well, if you are, you're a new type. I know them all. What did you get me down among the orioles for? Nobody down here's got anything on me."

"I want to be your friend," said Pen.

The other pulled down the corners of her lips mockingly.

"Old stuff, sister! Every con game that ever was started opened with that. Can the friendship! You'll need it next winter. Give it to me straight—what's the likes of you doing trailed by a bull?"

"It's a long story," said Pen.

"Well, my hearing's good."

"If we could get away somewhere—"

"Nothing doing! No back alley work"

for me! This is a first-rate public situation. Speak your piece!"

"I can't," said Pen helplessly. "There must be confidence between us first. You must know that it is something I can't blurt out in a place like this."

The black eyes bored her through and through. Curiosity and suspicion were struggling there. It was strongly in Pen's favor, however, that she was being tracked by a detective.

"Do you live in this town?" the girl demanded.

"No," said Pen. "I came here to meet you."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Well, I warn you I'm not, if anything is to be tried on. I got a husky friend here with me."

Glancing around guardedly, Pen had no great difficulty in picking him out—a nonchalant youth leaning against a bargain counter. He was very well dressed in sporting style, topped with an exaggerated flat tweed cap. His cheeks were as smooth and pink as a girl's, but the glance of his blue eyes was disillusioned.

"He may look like a boy soprano," said the girl dryly, "but I assure you he sings double bass. It's Babe Riordan, side partner of Spike's, that I brought along. Understand, wherever I go, the Babe goes too!"

"All right," said Pen.

"Well, what do you propose?"

"I'd rather leave it to you."

Another lightning-like dart of the black eyes. "Oh! Well, a room in a hotel's the safest place. The leading hotel here is the Bellevue."

"Oh, not there!" said Pen.

"Why not?"

"He—the man I want to tell you about—is there."

The girl took three steps to a counter where there was a salesgirl disengaged.

"What's the biggest hotel here next to the Bellevue?" she asked.

"The Southland."

"Thanks!" She returned to Pen. "Make it the Southland in half an hour."

"But the detective!" objected Pen.

"Pooh! He's just out of the egg," said the other, with a scornful glance. "He's still got his pin feathers stickin' on him. Listen! Babe and I will take a room at the hotel, and you come call on us, see?

That bird couldn't follow you upstairs, could he?"

"No, but he might hear me ask for you at the desk."

"Don't ask. Listen! Babe will be watching for you in the lobby. He'll be sitting there reading a paper. You stroll by him, and if everything's all right he'll flash a card under the paper with the room number on it, see? You get the number in your head, and come right up in the elevator."

Pen could not but admire the little creature's strategy; but the black eyes narrowed suspiciously again.

"Mind, if there's any funny work about this—if there's anybody near you when you come by Babe—you don't get the room number, see?"

Pen nodded. The little one lifted her voice blithely.

"Well, ta-ta, old girl! Call me up some time, and we'll make a date to lunch together. Remember me to the folks!"

She pattered coolly away in the direction of the burly loiterer, and brushed by him with a negligent hand at her back hair. Pen turned in the other direction. The detective came after her.

As she was about to leave the store, she saw her opportunity. An elevator door was just about to close. She slipped inside and was carried aloft. Her follower had to wait for the next car. She crossed the building on an upper floor, came down in a car on the other side, and got out of the store without seeing the man again.

Half an hour later she was knocking at the door of Room 1214 in the Southland Hotel. The door was opened by some one who remained invisible. Pen walked in with her heart in her mouth. Blanche was behind the door. She was smoking a cigarette. At the sight of Pen's face she laughed.

"For Mike's sake, don't look so scared, sister! Any bull would arrest you on suspicion with that face. Where is he?"

"I shook him off in the store," said Pen.

"Good work!" Blanche seemed disposed to be friendlier, but was still wary. "Just to be fair and aboveboard," she remarked casually, "I ought to tell you I carry a gun, sister."

She held up the little beaded bag. It had no draw string, and she carried it clutched about the neck. When she relaxed her grasp, it opened wide, revealing a



wicked little automatic pistol among her make-up.

Pen shrank back, and Blanche laughed again.

"You are a tender sprout!"

"Is that boy coming up here?" asked Pen anxiously.

"Sure!"

"Couldn't I talk to you without him?"

"Nothing doing! It would hurt Babe's feelings."

"I've got things to tell you I couldn't say before a man."

Blanche frowned.

"Say, you talk like a fillum!" She studied Pen afresh. "You don't look dangerous, but—say, you got to give me some line on your game, or nothin' doin'!"

"You've got to trust me," said Pen earnestly, "or we've had all our trouble for nothing."

"Trusting's not what I'm good at, sister," replied Blanche, with a vigorous gesture. "You give me some line on your game first. Who are you?"

"Well, I'm going to trust you," said Pen. She spread out her arms. "I'm Pendleton Broome."

For once the little creature was shaken out of her uncanny self-possession. She whistled like a boy, and her eyes glistened with excitement.

"The Don Counsell case!" she exclaimed. "You're in that! Good God! Has it got anything to do with me—with Spike?"

"I think it has," said Pen. "That's for you to say when I've told you all I know."

"Well, then, shoot! Shoot!" said Blanche excitedly.

They heard steps coming along the corridor. Blanche laid a hand on Pen's arm.

"Maybe it would be just as well if we saved Babe's tender ears!"

Babe himself opened the door and walked into the room.

Pen observed at close range that his years probably numbered a few more than the eighteen she had at first allowed him. He was a graceful youth and a comely one, but his blue eyes were as hard as china. Both Blanche and he had the look of unnatural high school children. Like actors, they carefully cultivated and played up this infantile effect.

The hard eyes of the young-old pair afflicted Pen with a kind of despair. How could she hope to win such eyes?

The young man pulled off his cap and bobbed his head in Pen's direction. There was something about her that made him distrust his manners. His disillusioned eyes suggested that he could be masterful enough with his own kind of girl.

"Our friend here says her tale ain't fit for men's ears," said Blanche flippantly.

The young man scowled without looking at Pen.

"What does she take us for—a pair of suckers?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of her," said Blanche. "I know who she is."

"Who is she?" he asked, as if Pen were not present.

"Tell you later, when I've heard the whole story."

He hesitated, scowling.

"Toddle along!" said Blanche.

"You're foolish," he muttered.

The black eyes flashed on him.

"That's for me to say!"

"She's beginning to accept me," Pen thought with rising hope.

"Wait a minute," said Blanche. "I'll satisfy you." To Pen she said suddenly:

"Put up your hands!"

"What for?" stammered Pen.

They jeered at her innocence.

"Put up your hands!" repeated Blanche.

Pen obeyed, and Blanche, with flying, practiced hands, felt all over her, while the young man stood by. Blanche nodded reassuringly to the Babe.

"I'll wait outside," he said surlily.

"Oh, if she wants to mix it up, I'll oblige her," said Blanche in her flip way; "though she is bigger than me."

"I'll wait outside," he repeated.

"Yes," said Blanche sarcastically, "and have the maid report you to the office as a suspicious character! Go down and read your paper. I'll send a boy for you."

He went.

Blanche turned mockingly to Pen.

"Now, darling!"

Pen felt dimly that the girl's flippant mockery concealed a sort of despair. She could admire the little creature's gameness and hardihood, but she could not possibly meet her on that ground. It rendered her helpless.

Meanwhile Blanche took a fresh cigarette, and called Pen's attention to the packet with a jerk of her head. Pen shook her head.

"Well, don't stand there like a waxwork

in a store window," said Blanche. "Dis-joint yourself!"

Pen sat in an armchair with her back to one of the windows. She groped within herself for something to go on with; but she felt empty.

Blanche moved restlessly around the room, plumped herself on the edge of the bed, and jumped up again. She glanced at Pen with increasing irritation. Apparently a silence drove her wild.

"You're so different from what I expected," Pen murmured at last, "that I scarcely know how to begin."

"What did you expect—a singing canary?" queried Blanche.

"I don't know. I got the idea from the newspaper that you were in trouble."

Blanche stared at Pen for a moment, then laughed metallically.

"Not me!" she said coolly. "I wasn't born yesterday!"

Pen perceived the nature of the misunderstanding, and blushed.

"I mean, I thought you'd lost somebody—that you cared for."

Blanche bared her teeth suddenly, like a hurt animal.

"Keep off that!" she said sharply.

"But that's why I wrote to you."

"Say!" cried Blanche, ugly and callous.

"If it's only sob stuff you're after, you come to the wrong shop, see? I don't deal in it! I'm water-tight and nickel-plated!"

"Why can't you be natural with me?" murmured Pen.

"I am natural. If I wanted to work you for anything, I could turn the wringer till the tub overflowed. I'm famous for it. Real tears without the aid of the glycerine bottle! But you said you wanted to be on the level."

"Do I look soft?" challenged Pen.

"Don't ask me," said Blanche, refusing to look at her. "I don't get you at all."

Pen tried another line.

"Have you been reading the newspapers about the Counsell case?"

"Off and on. I've had troubles of my own."

"Well," Pen said, low voiced—it cost her an effort to get it out—"Don Counsell is to me what I suppose Henry Talley was to you."

If Blanche was softened, she showed it in a sort of back-handed way.

"You mean Spike," she said. "That's all he answered to."

Pen's instinct began to show her the way.

"How did he get that name?" she asked casually.

Blanche fell into her little trap. She was standing at the other window, idly twisting the cord of the blind between thumb and forefinger. Her back was to Pen. Her voice came muffled and jerky.

"Because he was so tall, and slender—but not a gawk, neither. A peach of a figure—a thoroughbred! Stripped he weighed a hundred and fifty-five, and not an ounce to spare. He was a runner, a swimmer, a boxer—anything that needed speed and wind; and a dancer—the best dancer at Steck's Pavilion. Everything he did, he did out o' sight! Class, too. He could pass anywhere as a college boy or a Wall Street broker."

She suddenly whirled around.

"He was a gunman!" she cried defiantly. "Make what you like of it! He never asked for the good opinion of the likes of you, and neither do I! He was the coolest head of the lot. He went to his mark like a bulldog, and nothing could shake him off. What have you got to do with the likes of us? What do I care what you think? Both him and me had to fight our way since we were kids. We weren't going to take scraps from the tables of the rich. We were out to get the best there was for ourselves. We were outsiders. Well, the insiders were our enemies, and we went after them!"

She turned back to the window, and began to sob in a hard, dry way that scared Pen. The hurrying, toneless voice went on.

"To everybody else he was cool and smooth as hard enamel. Not to me! He was human to me. Light-hearted as a boy, when there was no business on hand. You were sure of having a good time with Spike. Make you die laughing with his wild, comical ways. He was a man—~~he~~ was real. There was a fire in him—~~on~~—~~God!~~"

She turned and flung herself face down across the bed, her arms hanging down the other side.

"He's gone! He's gone!" she moaned. "And I'm left! Oh, God, I can't bear it!"

Pen went and sat on the bed, and put a hand on the other girl's shoulder. Blanche flung it off roughly. Rolling over, she sat up with her tormented face not a foot away from Pen's. Pen did not shrink.

"You talk about loving a man! I know

how your kind loves—cool and dainty! What do you know about loving, brought up good, with a home and a family and all? Everything's provided for you. I never had nothing—till I got him. He was the first who ever belonged to me. I had to fight every inch of my way, and be on guard every minute. He had to, too, just the same; but we could let down with each other."

She flung herself down in another wild burst of weeping. Pen let it wear itself out.

"I am just the same as you, underneath," she murmured.

Blanche quieted down. In her abrupt way, she got to her feet and went to the bureau. Emptying out the little beaded bag, she began to rub fresh color into her cheeks, making strange faces into the glass meanwhile; but the tears flowed faster than she could repair the damage.

"Oh, damn!" she cried, throwing down the rouge pad.

She drifted around the room with her lithe, abrupt movements like a diminutive tigress, the baby face all woebegone and hollowed.

"Why couldn't you leave me alone?" she said crossly. "What you want to get me going for? Now you know what's inside, I hope you're satisfied!"

Notwithstanding the querulous tone, Pen saw that she had been accepted as a fellow woman. There was no more strangeness between them.

"What do you want of me?" Blanche went on. "What good am I to anybody now? For two cents I'd fling myself out of the window and end it!"

"I thought you'd want to know what happened to Spike Talley," said Pen.

It had an electrical effect on Blanche. She ran to Pen.

"Do you know? Do you know? Do you know?" she demanded, moving her little clenched fists up and down.

"I have only a suspicion. We must follow it out together."

"Well, open it! Open it!"

Her tigerish look gave Pen a fresh fear.

"You must promise me something!"

"Oh, my God! What?"

"Not to try to take the law into your own hands."

"What are you trying to protect the man for?"

"I'm not trying to protect him. I want to bring him into the prisoners' dock."

"Well, I promise," said Blanche unwillingly. "Who was it?"

"Do you know who Spike Talley was working for when he disappeared?"

"No, I don't!" cried Blanche. "Don't torment me with any more questions. Who was it?"

"I suspect it was Ernest Riever."

The great name pulled Blanche up short. She stared at Pen with wide, troubled eyes.

"What for?" she whispered hoarsely.

"Would you mind very much," Pen faltered, "if I said I suspected that it was Spike Talley who shot Collis Dongan?"

Blanche smiled scornfully.

"Not at all," she said coolly, "if it was his job." Her eyes widened again. "I begin to get you," she went on slowly. "You mean Riever hired Spike, and when the job was done—he croaked him?"

Pen nodded.

"Maybe so," said Blanche somberly. "What do you know?"

Pen told her.

"You see it's next to nothing," she said agitatedly. "They wouldn't call it evidence. Just the same, *I know!* What can you add to it?" she implored, clasping her hands.

Blanche stood with withdrawn gaze, like a little statue of abstraction. "Not much, right off the bat," she murmured; "but it's an idea. Things can be found out. Funny it never struck me that Dongan was killed the night Spike disappeared! I knew Spike was on a job, too; but everybody said Counsell did that one. I can tell you one thing—it was a rich man Spike was working for, one of the richest. He said as much."

"That's something," said Pen.

"I knew it was dangerous work, too; because I heard the price. It scared me, and I'm not easy scared; but I couldn't let on. We were going to marry on it; we go out to California and live like other people—raise things, and—"

The tears began to flow again, but Blanche shook her head savagely.

"I'm not going to cry again! I'm not going to cry any more till I see this through!"

"Can you think of anything else?" begged Pen.

"Wait a minute. It was part of Spike's job to dress up every evening—big white shirt front and all. He was crazy about it. He could get away with it, too. He

would have dinner at some swell joint, and—"

"Could it have been the Hotel Warrington?" suggested Pen.

"That as well as another. Wait a minute! He brought me a menu card to show me. The top, with the name of the hotel, was torn off; but I have the rest of it home. Easy enough to find out if that's one of the Warrington cards."

"Yes, yes!" said Pen. "Anything else? Oh, think!"

"Wait a minute! There was something else—only a little thing. More than once Spike mentioned that his boss had elegant whisky. Said it stood in a cut glass bottle on a table, and every time he went there his boss would say: 'Help yourself.' That seemed to strike Spike. It was so friendly, from a man like that."

"Riever is an expert on poisons," said Pen, aghast.

Blanche's face was like a mask of pain, the lips drawn taut over the exposed teeth.

"I get you!" she murmured hoarsely. "The last time Spike helped himself—"

The two girls stared at each other. Something seemed to click inside Blanche, and instantly she was her ordinary wary, hard, self-possessed little self again. She moved toward the telephone.

"I'll send for the Babe," she said. "You can count on him the same as me. He looked up to Spike. He's got a good head on him, too, for a kid. We'll go over everything together, and then the kid and I'll fluff back. In N'Yawk there's a dozen young fellows 'll help—all pals of Spike's. I'll organize them!"

#### XIV

It was five o'clock, and the stores were closing, as Pen sought for the big car. She picked it out from afar, parked in the double rank that lined the Lexington Street hill. For five hours it had completely passed out of her mind, and she was terrified now of facing the justly indignant chauffeur. To be sure, she had told him she didn't know how long she would be; but five hours!

It proved to be nothing in his life. That was how he spent the greater part of his days—waiting. It was easier to wait than to drive. He opened the door for her with a perfectly good-humored face, and Pen, much relieved, asked him to drive to the Bellevue.

She expected another ordeal here. What sort of report would Riever's agent have made to his master?

Riever was on the lookout for her. Without appearing to, Pen studied his face. Little was to be read there. The malicious smile told her nothing, for she had learned that it was merely a trick of his ugly features. Often, when his smile was most devilish, he was really trying to ingratiate himself.

When he got in, seeing Pen's meager bundles, he said:

"Is that all you got all day?"

Pen suspected a thrust, though it was a natural enough remark.

"I ordered most of the things sent by mail," she said. "It is quicker."

Before they had gone far, Pen discovered that his humor had changed since morning. In a clumsy sort of way, he was trying to express contrition for his ill temper. He was not the sort of man who could bring out a frank apology.

Pen wondered. The detective could not have given a disturbing report of her. Perhaps, in order to conceal the fact that she had given him the slip, he had made up a harmless account of her day.

At any rate, Riever was softened. He was less glib. He looked at Pen in a new way. He asked her little questions about her day, apparently not with any idea of entrapping her, but because he wanted to share in her concerns.

Pen was much confused by this new aspect of his. It raised unanswerable questions. Was it possible that the horrible creature was really touched? How could he have a heart? Suppose, instead of fighting her, he came crawling to her feet—how would she meet that situation?

It was horrible—horrible! Yet she was thrilled with a sense of power, too. She could not have any compunctions against making Riever suffer. If only she were able to handle him! She foresaw breathless danger.

Meanwhile there they were, cooped up together in the luxurious little cab. Had it been little Blanche Paglar sitting there beside Riever, her flesh would have been quivering with hatred. Pen was not of so simple a constitution. Her flesh took no alarm from his proximity. She could look at him coolly and speculatively.

Her strongest feeling was one of contempt, seeing him begin to turn a little ab-



ject. He had terrible power—she never forgot that—but it was not in himself. There were moments when she found herself detached, and a little sorry for him.

But while she was considering him thus dispassionately—they had got out in the country by this time—he pulled a little case out of his side pocket, and, snapping it open, revealed a slender bracelet of platinum and diamonds, exquisitely wrought.

"Will you accept it?" he asked.

Pen started as if she had been stung, and a surprising feeling of rage welled up in her. She could scarcely speak for it.

"I couldn't possibly! I couldn't possibly!" she murmured.

"It wasn't very expensive," he said deprecatingly. "I purposely picked out something inexpensive."

Inexpensive! Pen stared at him. The thing had obviously cost thousands; but she saw that he was sincere.

"It attracted me," he went on. "It's so hard to find anything that looks as if any thought or care had gone into it. That's why I got it."

"You had no right to suppose that I would accept it," said Pen sorely.

"I didn't suppose it. I just took a chance."

Pen was reminded that she *must* keep on terms with him.

"I'm sorry," she said more mildly; "but I couldn't possibly."

"Is it because you detest me so?" he asked with ugly, curling lip.

Pen's anger had betrayed her. She put her wits to work to repair the damage.

"Not at all!" she said coolly. "It's because you're so rich. It sickens me, the way people fawn on you, all expecting something. That's why I can't take it."

"You could take it without being like other people," he said.

A struggle was going on inside Pen. Not that she wanted the glittering bracelet, for it was horrible to her; but her cooler self was saying:

"You ought to take it to put his mind at ease. You can return it later. It is merely silly to be high-minded in dealing with a man like this!"

But at the suggestion of taking it her fingers automatically closed until the nails were digging into her palms. It was useless to think of it. She knew that her fingers would break sooner than open to receive the little box.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Please put it away."

He snapped the box shut and dropped it into his pocket again. For a good while he looked out of the window without saying anything. Pen could not read his thoughts.

"Oh, well," she said to herself, "it's got to be understood that he can't give me things!"

They dined in Annapolis. Evidently the dinner had been ordered ahead by telephone. They were received by an expectant waiter, there were roses on the table, and the best that the little town afforded was ready and hot. Being a woman, Pen could not but be pleased by such attentions, though a mocking little voice inside her whispered:

"This is how silly women are snared!"

While she enjoyed the food thoroughly, and was charming to Riever, all the while a little dialogue went on within. One voice was saying accusingly:

"Sitting here smiling and encouraging your lover's deadly enemy!"

"How else can I save my lover?" the other voice replied.

It was eight o'clock, and beginning to grow dark, when they came out of the hotel. Pen shivered with repulsion at the thought of being cooped up with Riever for the sixty-mile drive through the night.

"Do you ever drive?" she asked offhand.

"Oh, yes," he said unsuspectingly.

"Let's put the chauffeur inside and ride out in the air. The moon will be up before long."

Riever scowled, and a hateful answer leaped to his lips; but he bit it back.

"All right," he mumbled.

And so they rode. He proved to be a skillful chauffeur. There was something quite impressive in the nonchalant way he spun the wheel with one hand on a curve. He had a bland disregard for speed laws, having learned that few constables have the temerity to stop so princely an equipage. They went through Camp Parole at forty miles an hour, but fortunately without hitting any of the dark-skinned inhabitants of that humble suburb. At the green light which marks the W. B. and A. station they turned sharply and streaked away toward the south, to the throaty growl of an open exhaust.

Their conversation was fitful, as needs be on the front seat of a speeding car; but

they were entirely friendly. The episode of the bracelet had apparently been forgotten. Both pairs of eyes were hypnotized by the strong path of light on the yellow road before them. The bordering leafage was shown up in a queer chemical green, like stage scenery. The moon came up, but what is moonlight to automobilists? The reticent moon disdains to compete with headlights.

When they were within a few miles of Absalom's Island, Riever, glancing at the clock under the cowl, said:

"We've come too fast. I didn't order the boat until a quarter to ten."

He took his foot off the accelerator, and the big car loafed along. Relieved of the strain, their eyes were free to wander around. All Riever's glances were for Pen's profile.

"You're a funny one!" he said abruptly. "One would think you blamed me for having a lot of money."

"Not blame you," said Pen; "though I think it's unjust, somehow. But you didn't make conditions."

"Why is it unjust?"

"Oh, don't ask me to argue it with you. I've never thought such things out. It's just a feeling I have."

"If somebody offered you a fortune, would you turn it down?"

"Depends upon the conditions attached," said Pen calmly.

"If there were no conditions?"

"No, I wouldn't turn it down."

"Good!" he said. "All they say against money may be true; but just the same, when people make out to despise it, they're lying!"

"No doubt," Pen agreed.

"I like to talk to you," he said.

"You're real!"

"Thanks," replied Pen dryly.

"What do you think about me?" he blurted out.

"I don't know," said Pen.

"Well, it's true that nobody really knows anybody else," he said. "I wish I could get myself over to you. Since I've known you, I've realized more than ever what a lot there is missing in my life. Nobody knows me. There's a sort of wall cuts me off from everybody."

It was very confusing to Pen's ideas to discover that a man could be a black villain and sentimental, too.

"Oh, I wish he wouldn't!" she thought

uncomfortably. "Well, it's your own fault, isn't it?" she said aloud.

He chuckled.

"I love the way you come back at me. I suppose it is my own fault. I ought to climb over the wall; but it's difficult. They put me behind it young."

After a while he spoke again.

"It's a great thought, isn't it, to think of having somebody you could be absolutely honest with?"

"Of course," said Pen, who was reminded of Blanche and Spike.

As Riever talked on, she began to see how he reconciled villainy and sentiment in his mind.

"Of course it would have to be a person with a strong mind. For when I say 'honest' I don't mean all this sickening cant about goodness and unselfishness and meekness that the church hands out. Nobody takes that seriously any more. Man is by nature a rapacious animal—out for what he can get. Well, his highest function must be to realize his nature. Therefore I say that the highest type of man is the man who gets what he wants."

"He actually looks upon himself as a romantic figure!" Pen thought wonderingly.

As she made no answer, he asked somewhat uneasily:

"That's right, isn't it?"

"Not for me," said Pen. "Man may be a rapacious animal, but he is also capable of controlling his rapacity; and it seems to me it's only by controlling it that he can be even decently happy. I've read somewhere that beasts of prey always come to a violent end."

Riever smiled in a superior sort of way.

"You're stronger than most women," he said with a sneer; "but you can't let go of your religious tags. I suppose it's too much to expect."

Pen only smiled.

"Now I suppose I've offended you," he said presently.

"Not in the least!" replied Pen.

"No, you don't give a damn one way or the other," he said sorely.

Pen laughed.

"Nothing I say pleases you!"

"You please me," he muttered; "but—"

The end of his sentence trailed off unintelligibly. What a queer mixture he was, Pen mused! Arrogance and self-distrust; attempting to strut before her, and collapsing at the lift of an eyebrow. She failed to

take into account the terrible way in which her clear nature struck into the dark recesses of the ugly little man's being. He could assert himself strongly enough against anybody but her; and the more he was obliged to cringe to her, the more he desired her.

As they bowled over the causeway to the island, Riever said:

"I haven't given up hope of you, though. You have a natural hatred of sham. I'll teach you to face the truth yet!"

Pen smiled on.

At the steamboat wharf at the other end of the island the speed boat was waiting, her starboard light a startling gleam of emerald in a dusky gray world, her white-clad crew sitting quietly in the moonlight. Pen and her packages were handed aboard, and they flew for Broome's Point.

Out on the water the moon indifferently resumed her sway. The whole earth was hers to tread on. The front of the island, with its odd row of whitewashed shacks, looked like something as foreign as Algiers. In the bow wave that rolled away from the speed boat there was a dull phosphorescent glow like saturated moonlight. Looking over through the shadow of the boat, one could see fishes dart away like little balls of pale moonlight. Pen's face was as beautiful and passionless as the moon's.

In the sheltered nook astern, the face of Riever, the would-be strong man, the devil's advocate, broke up like any calfish boy's. He fumbled clumsily for her hand.

"Don't!" whispered Pen sharply. "They'll see!"

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"I won't have it!" said Pen.

His eyebrows went up in a stare of indignant amazement. Nobody had ever spoken to him like that. As it had absolutely no effect, however, they gradually came down again into the likeness of a sulky schoolboy's.

"Aw, Pen!"

She struggled hard with her repulsion.

"Well—well—I hate to be touched!"

"One would think there was something the matter with me," he muttered.

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The speed boat approached unnoticed from the other side. The instant she drew alongside, Riever sprang out and ran across. Pen guessed what was happening, and her heart seemed to stop beating and sink like a stone; but she followed Riever with a composed face.

All the men were looking over the other side, their heads down, to keep the blinding glare out of their eyes. One had a rope with a grappling iron on the end of it. He was fishing for something, while they all watched. The burly figure of Delehanty was conspicuous.

"What's wrong here?" demanded Riever.

"Don't know as there's anything wrong, sir. One of the men was swimming here, and he said he dived into something suspicious. We're trying to locate it."

As he spoke, the man with the rope cried:

"I've got it!"

He started to haul in. The green water surged up a little, and the curved stem of a canoe rose out of it. The valise appeared, tied to a thwart.

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"Counsell's canoe, by God! He never went away from here!"

## XV

Of one accord, all the men turned and looked at Pen. She bore it unflinchingly. Riever's face, working uncontrollably with rage, looked truly devilish. Conscious that he was betraying himself, he turned his back to the light.

When she had given them their fill of looking, Pen turned and began to walk slowly away.

"One moment, miss," said Delehanty.

Pen half turned.

"I'm going home," she said in a composed voice. "If I'm wanted, you'll find me there."

they were entirely friendly. The episode of the bracelet had apparently been forgotten. Both pairs of eyes were hypnotized by the strong path of light on the yellow road before them. The bordering leafage was shown up in a queer chemical green, like stage scenery. The moon came up, but what is moonlight to automobilists? The reticent moon disdains to compete with headlights.

When they were within a few miles of Absalom's Island, Riever, glancing at the clock under the cowl, said:

"We've come too fast. I didn't order the boat until a quarter to ten."

He took his foot off the accelerator, and the big car loafed along. Relieved of the strain, their eyes were free to wander around. All Riever's glances were for Pen's profile.

"You're a funny one!" he said abruptly. "One would think you blamed me for having a lot of money."

"Not blame you," said Pen; "though I think it's unjust, somehow. But you didn't make conditions."

"Why is it unjust?"

"Oh, don't ask me to argue it with you. I've never thought such things out. It's just a feeling I have."

"If somebody offered you a fortune, would you turn it down?"

"Depends upon the conditions attached," said Pen calmly.

"If there were no conditions?"

"No, I wouldn't turn it down."

"Good!" he said. "All they say against money may be true; but just the same, when people make out to despise it, they're lying!"

"No doubt," Pen agreed.

"I like to talk to you," he said. "You're real!"

"Thanks," replied Pen dryly.

"What do you think about me?" he blurted out.

"I don't know," said Pen.

"Well, it's true that nobody really knows anybody else," he said. "I wish I could get myself over to you. Since I've known you, I've realized more than ever what a lot there is missing in my life. Nobody knows me. There's a sort of wall cuts me off from everybody."

It was very confusing to Pen's ideas to discover that a man could be a black villain and sentimental, too.

"Oh, I wish he wouldn't!" she thought

uncomfortably. "Well, it's your own fault, isn't it?" she said aloud.

He chuckled.

"I love the way you come back at me. I suppose it is my own fault. I ought to climb over the wall; but it's difficult. They put me behind it young."

After a while he spoke again.

"It's a great thought, isn't it, to think of having somebody you could be absolutely honest with?"

"Of course," said Pen, who was reminded of Blanche and Spike.

As Riever talked on, she began to see how he reconciled villainy and sentiment in his mind.

"Of course it would have to be a person with a strong mind. For when I say 'honest' I don't mean all this sickening cant about goodness and unselfishness and meekness that the church hands out. Nobody takes that seriously any more. Man is by nature a rapacious animal—out for what he can get. Well, his highest function must be to realize his nature. Therefore I say that the highest type of man is the man who gets what he wants."

"He actually looks upon himself as a romantic figure!" Pen thought wonderingly.

As she made no answer, he asked somewhat uneasily:

"That's right, isn't it?"

"Not for me," said Pen. "Man may be a rapacious animal, but he is also capable of controlling his rapacity; and it seems to me it's only by controlling it that he can be even decently happy. I've read somewhere that beasts of prey always come to a violent end."

Riever smiled in a superior sort of way.

"You're stronger than most women," he said with a sneer; "but you can't let go of your religious tags. I suppose it's too much to expect."

Pen only smiled.

"Now I suppose I've offended you," he said presently.

"Not in the least!" replied Pen.

"No, you don't give a damn one way or the other," he said sorely.

Pen laughed.

"Nothing I say pleases you!"

"You please me," he muttered; "but—"

The end of his sentence trailed off unintelligibly. What a queer mixture he was, Pen mused! Arrogance and self-distrust; attempting to strut before her, and collapsing at the lift of an eyebrow. She failed to



take into account the terrible way in which her clear nature struck into the dark recesses of the ugly little man's being. He could assert himself strongly enough against anybody but her; and the more he was obliged to cringe to her, the more he desired her.

As they bowled over the causeway to the island, Riever said:

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When she had given them their fill of looking, Pen turned and began to walk slowly away.

"One moment, miss," said Delehanty.

Pen half turned.

"I'm going home," she said in a composed voice. "If I'm wanted, you'll find me there."

She walked on, taking care not to hurry herself; but her heart was beating with a bird's wings.

"No, you don't!" cried Delehanty, and started after her.

Riever, with an odd, tense spring, caught the detective's arm. There was a whispered colloquy. As a result Delehanty stayed, while Riever went after Pen. The little man, tense with passion, had for the first time a sort of dignity. He was rather a terrible figure. Pen, hearing his catlike steps behind her, was sorely afraid. He overtook her alongside the automobile that was waiting in the road.

"Will you get in?" he asked in a queer, thick voice.

Pen reflected that she would be safer in the car with the chauffeur than walking up the hill alone. She got in without speaking.

During the short ride up to the house they exchanged no word. Pen was pressed into her corner, Riever into his. He sat as still as an animal, his back slightly hunched, his hands on his thighs. Ugly-looking hands he had, which the moonlight could not dignify—too small for a man, furtive-looking, hands acquainted with evil. Pen shuddered at them.

When they passed between the broken gates and rounded the shrubbery, Pen saw with dismay that all the windows of the big house were dark. Her father had gone to bed.

When the car stopped, she jumped out, avoiding Riever's offered assistance.

"You needn't wait," Riever told the chauffeur. "I'll walk back."

Pen was horribly afraid. Her instinct was to dart through the door, slam it in his face, and turn the key; but flight was too abject. If she yielded him the ascendancy, she could never get it back again.

"I'm not afraid of him!" she said to herself, though her teeth chattered. "If I stand my ground, I have nothing to fear!"

The car went back. Riever stepped up on the porch by the two boxes. Pen stood there.

"You tricked me!" he said with a violent gesture, but taking care not to raise his voice. "You said he'd gone from here, but he's been here ever since. You're hiding him now. What did you go to town for to-day? What was in those packages you made me bring home in my car—a disguise for him?"

Pen was not dismayed by this. On the contrary, as soon as he began to speak, the man lost his impressiveness. Seeing him overcome with impotent rage, Pen began to feel strong again.

"I left the packages in the boat," she said scornfully. "No doubt by this time Delehanty has examined them."

"What is this man to you?" demanded Riever.

"I've already told you—no more than any poor hunted creature."

"If you lied once, you can lie again!"

Pen shrugged.

"Swear that he's not your lover!" he demanded.

"To you?" cried Pen indignantly.

"Then he is your lover! You're keeping him close, I dare say. You don't shiver when he touches you!"

A great anger came to Pen's assistance.

"You fool!" she cried. "Your disgusting money has turned your head! Who do you think you are, to speak this way to me? I owe you nothing—neither oaths nor explanations—nothing!"

Riever could not stand up under it. His chin sank, his body twisted. As a matter of fact, he simply could not face the thought that the man he hated so much had won the woman he desired. He snatched at any hope.

"Well, if you're not hiding him, where is he?" he mumbled.

"I don't know. Far away, I hope."

"How could he have got away?"

"He walked up the Neck Road while you were searching the shores."

"Oh, God, if I could believe you!" groaned Riever.

"Well, I can't help you," said Pen.

She saw that with every word she was regaining the upper hand, and her heart was strong. A cajoling note crept into Riever's voice.

"Well, you couldn't do him any further good by lying. If he's anywhere near, we're bound to get him in the morning. Within an hour Delehanty will send a party by boat up to the head of Back Creek. They'll form a line across the neck. At dawn we stretch another line across this end, and close up. He can't escape between them!"

Pen's heart contracted painfully, but she gave no outward sign.

"What are you telling me this for?" she asked.

"You can't do him any further good. Leave him to his fate. Tell me where he is, so that I'll know you're on the square with me."

"It's nothing to me whether you think I'm on the square or not."

Riever raised his clenched hands in a gesture of fury.

"I've got to know!"

"I wouldn't tell you if I knew," said Pen. "I wouldn't betray any man—not you, if you were in his place."

With a painful struggle for self-command, he took still another tone.

"Well, that's all right. I'll say no more about him; but give me a pledge!"

"Why should I?" she said coldly.

Again the shaking gesture.

"I can't stand this!" he cried.

"I'm afraid you'll have to."

His voice became more abject.

"Wait a minute! You don't understand. All I want is a word. You see how I am suffering. A word from you will end it!"

Pen was too startled to be angry any more. A terribly dangerous situation faced her, and she needed all her wits to meet it.

He took heart from her silence, her apparent uncertainty.

"I'm asking you to marry me," he said, with a touch of his old arrogance. "Do you get it? Mrs. Ernest Riever! Think what it means! What do you say?"

"I won't give you an answer now," she murmured.

"You've got to answer me!" he said violently. "I've got to know how you stand toward me!"

She was silent.

"Look at it as a young fellow would look at a chance to advance himself," he rushed on. It was one kind of a love-making. "Look what I have to offer you! A place in the sun—a place that every living woman would envy you! Isn't that sweet to you? You'd grace it, too, with your beauty and your high ways. You weren't shaped to wear print dresses, Pen. Think, think what you'd be—a sort of queen—a queen without any responsibilities—carried about like a queen wherever you wanted to go, with an army to wait on you, and your slightest wish granted!"

"I don't want to be a queen," murmured Pen, a little dizzied by this rush of words.

"Well, then, anything you wanted. Do you want to do good? You can have whatever sums you want to lay out in good

works—absolutely without limit. You can make a name as a philanthropist such as nobody ever had before. You couldn't refuse such a chance—you couldn't! What do you say?"

"I will not answer you now," repeated Pen.

There was nothing else that she could say.

He stared at her as if unable to credit that she did not jump at such a chance.

"You've got to give me an answer!" he said, showing his teeth. "I'm going to find out how you stand toward this murderer."

"Be careful!" cried Pen.

That cry of hers virtually answered him, but he would not face it. He became abject again.

"Well, I'll say no more about him. Suppose you have a sort of fancy for him. All right—I'll give you a chance to save him. Marry me at once, and come away on the Alexandra with me, and I'll call off the chase. I'll withdraw the reward. With me out of it, the case against Counsell would collapse like a pricked balloon. I couldn't offer fairer than that, could I? Come back with me now! The yacht has steam up. Will you? Will you?"

Pen was shaken.

"Would you really take me on such terms?" she murmured.

"Oh, God! I'd take you on any terms!" he groaned.

The thought flew into Pen's brain:

"You couldn't trust him!"

She energetically shook her head.

"I won't be rushed into anything," she said.

"Then I won't ask for a positive answer to-night," he stuttered. "Only just a sign—just a sign to show me that I'm not hateful to you. Kiss me, Pen!"

She hesitated.

"Kiss me, Pen—and I'll hold Delehanty back."

She yielded. That is to say, she yielded with her mind; but the flesh rebelled. He gathered her in his arms taut as a bow-string. As his face approached hers, she snapped. With a wild, blind reaction, she tore herself free. No man could have held her.

The open door was behind her. She darted through and slammed it shut. He put his shoulder against it, but she was at least as strong as he. She got the key turned.

He beat on the door with the sides of his fists, cursing horribly, but, as always, oddly careful not to make too much noise.

"To be married to such a maniac!" thought Pen, nauseated with disgust.

Like a maniac, he fell suddenly silent. She pictured him listening. Presently his voice came softly, as if he had his lips to the crack of the door, wheedling, crafty, threatening, more disgusting than his rage.

"Are you there? Listen! I'll give you another chance. Open the door!"

A silence.

"If you don't, he goes to the chair. I'll spend every cent I possess to send him to the chair. Do you get that? Better open the door!"

A silence.

"It'll be too late when he's strapped in the chair with the black cap on and the electrode at the back of his handsome white neck. You'll remember it was really you that put him there! Twelve hundred volts they give them. You can smell them burning. Well, how about it?"

"Go away!" said Pen.

"Oh, all right! All right!" he cried violently.

She heard him leap down by the boxes. Looking through the narrow pane beside the door, she saw him run along the drive, brandishing his clenched fists over his head.

Pen went upstairs. A sudden weakness overcame her, and she could scarcely drag one foot after the other.

As she reached the upper landing, a door opened, and her father came out, carrying a candle. She had to assume some semblance of self-possession.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing, dad."

"I thought I heard a little commotion downstairs. It wakened me."

"Only the closing of the front door. You must have been dreaming."

"Who brought you home?"

"Mr. Riever."

A note of pleased excitement crept into Pendleton's voice.

"You have been with him all day?"

"Almost all day."

He paddled close to her, the candle shaking a little in his agitation. He was wearing an old-fashioned night shirt slit at the sides, revealing an unexpectedly plump calf.

"Oh, Pen, it's all right between you two, isn't it?" he said. "It means so much to me, my dear!"

Pen was too weary to get angry all over again. She merely smiled faintly at the irony of life.

Pendleton had put off his grand airs with his clothes. He was as simple now as his old-fashioned shirt.

"Pen, dear, think what it means to me! A frustrated old man! I'm a failure. I can't do anything for you; and I see this chance for you to establish yourself! Don't let any romantic youthful folly stand in the way, daughter. There's nothing in it. I know. Safety is everything!"

"Dad, you must leave this to me," Pen muttered painfully.

"I will! I will!" he said brightly. "I have every confidence in you. If you think of the matter at all, there can be but the one answer."

"Go to bed, dear," said Pen, kissing him.

## XVI

ONE of Delehanty's first measures was to have the big house watched. Even before Riever could have got back to the beach, Pen, from her front window, saw the little group come in by the drive, separate, and lose themselves in the darkness.

One of the detectives came to the house. Pendleton let him in. By Mr. Delehanty's orders he was to keep watch inside the house all night. He was to remain in the hall of the second floor.

Pendleton's outraged protests were in vain. The man brought a chair up from the dining room, and planted it outside Pen's door. It was Keesing, whom Pen already had down in her black books—a gaunt, red-haired young man, curiously eager to do spy work.

Pen locked her door and paced up and down her room, raging. Her weariness was forgotten.

"Trapped! Trapped! Trapped!" she said to herself with every footfall.

To be sure, the flat roof of the porch ran around outside her windows. It would be no great matter to slide down one of the porch posts to the ground; but no doubt they were watching her windows from the outside.

Within the space of half an hour she nearly went out of her mind. Then there was a diversion. Once more the *rat-tat-tat* of the big knocker reverberated through the lofty halls, and Pendleton had to paddle downstairs again. Pen, listening with



all her ears, made out the rumble of Delehanty's voice. Some one else was speaking, too.

Finally Delehanty raised his voice:

"Keesing!"

"Yes, sir!"

The detective clattered down the uncarpeted stairs, and Pen opened her door a crack. She heard her father coming up, and from a certain lightness in his step she guessed that he was bringing what he considered to be good news.

Seeing her at her door, he broke out:

"It's all right, my dear. It's Mr. Riever and Mr. Delehanty. There's been a misunderstanding, it seems. They have no intention of annoying us. They apologized most handsomely. The man is to be taken away. All the men are to be taken away."

Pen smiled scornfully.

"Do they expect me to be taken in so easily?" she thought.

"Mr. Riever said, if it would not be presuming too much, could he speak to you for a minute?" Pendleton went on. "He wants to apologize to you personally. Better go down, dear. God knows, this is no time for formality!"

It was on Pen's lips to refuse scornfully, but curiosity was strong within her. If she expected to get the better of these men, she must know what they were up to. Perhaps they intended to arrest her; but in that case they would hardly have got up this comedy of sending the men up and taking them away again. Virtually she had been under arrest while Keesing sat at her door.

Declining the offer of her father's candle, Pen went down.

Riever alone was framed in the opening of the front door, with the moonlight behind him. When Pen got close enough, she saw Delehanty and Keesing waiting in the grass below the porch. She stopped a little more than arm's length from Riever. She couldn't see his face well.

"You needn't be afraid," he said, in a voice that was smooth, yet a little truculent, too—a sort of hangdog voice. "I just wanted to tell you that when I found Delehanty had had the house surrounded, and had put a man inside, I was sore. I made him call them off. I didn't want you to think I had a hand in it."

This was such a violent change from half an hour before that Pen was a little disconcerted. It was characteristic of Riever, however, to ignore everything that had

happened previously—characteristic of the spoiled child of any age.

"Much obliged," she said, trying to keep the note of irony out of her voice.

If he heard irony, he did not betray it.

"Well, that's all I wanted to say—that I was sorry you were annoyed. Will you shake hands on it?"

"Surely!" said Pen. She offered her hand with a mental reservation: "If you're deceiving me, as I suspect, this doesn't count!"

She thought he would never have done fondling her hand. She ground her teeth and endured it.

"Well, good night!" he said at last.

"Good night," said Pen.

When he had taken two steps, he stopped.

"I said *all* his men," he told her, a sly note creeping into his voice. "Watch and make sure."

Pen waited in the doorway. Riever, stepping off the porch, spoke to Delehanty. The detective put a hand to his lips and blew a whistle. Out of various shrubbery corners of the grounds figures emerged and approached their chief. It was like a scene in a melodrama, Pen thought, with curling lip. There were six of them. That was the number she had seen enter the grounds.

"Good night," said Riever in a purring voice.

"Good night, miss," fawned Delehanty.

"Good night, miss," said Keesing, taking his tone from his betters.

"Good night," replied Pen clearly.

They all moved off in a body toward the gates. Pen, smiling scornfully, turned back upstairs.

"What sort of an imbecile do they take me for? Presently they'll come sneaking back. Expect me to lead them to him, do they?"

Suddenly the quality of her smile changed.

"Well, why not do it? It's the best idea I've had yet!"

She went into her room in a study.

The big house was laid out on the simplest of plans. As you entered the front door, the two drawing-rooms were on the left of the central hall. On the right was an immense dining room, with a pantry behind it as big as the living room in many a cottage. In the rear extension were the kitchen and various offices.

The second floor was divided into four

great chambers of equal size and a smaller room over the entrance, where Pen kept her sewing machine. Her father slept in the room above the dining room. It had a door into the room behind it, which was his study, workshop, and general receptacle. Pen had the other front room, and it also communicated with the room behind it, which was called the guest chamber. The door between the two rooms was always supposed to be locked.

The second floor of the rear extension was on a lower level. That is to say, you started down the big stairway and reached the rear rooms from the turn. The extension contained the famous bathroom, long out of repair, various cupboards and store-rooms, and the two servants' rooms, which looked to the rear. In the main block of the house there was a third story, with four more big bedrooms, and above that again was the "cupalaw."

Pendleton had gone back to bed. Pen got two lamps and flitted into the rear extension. Her father, accustomed to her peregrinations over the house at all hours, paid no attention, even if he heard. The two servants' rooms were not used, but each contained various articles of furniture.

Pen lit her lamps, placing them so far back from the windows that the lamps themselves could not have been seen by anybody who might chance to look up from the yard below. Any one who was not familiar with the house would naturally suppose that the two lighted windows were in the same room.

Pen calculated.

"I told him to pack up his things and hide them before starting. That will take him about half an hour. It will take him twenty minutes to cross the fields. He can't get here in much less than an hour. I'll start in half an hour."

Returning to her own room, she dropped to her knees at one of the front windows, and peered over the sill. She strained her eyes to watch the part of the grounds that was within range; but the very mysteriousness of moonlight balked her.

The moon was in the south, throwing long shadows directly athwart the lawn. The trees and shrubs of the overgrown garden offered scores of hiding places. More than once she thought she saw dark spots that did not belong there, and shadows seemed to move. She could not be sure.

For that matter, she knew that men

could come along the beach below and scramble up the honeysuckle vines. In this way they could surround the house without crossing the open space in front. She was morally certain that the detectives had returned, but she could not spot them.

At the end of half an hour she dressed herself in her black dress and put on stout shoes. With a wildly beating heart she stole downstairs and let herself softly out on the porch, leaving the door open. Here, for the benefit of anybody who might be watching her, she gave an imitation of one terrified and undecided; walking unevenly up and down, coming to the edge and peering out, then running back into the house in a sudden panic, and once more timorously venturing forth. Finally she took to the shrubbery.

She ran to the gates, scuttling like a rabbit from clump to clump, her head continually over her shoulder. She wished to be followed, but of course she must not appear to wish to be followed. She also wished to find out whether she was followed, but she must at all costs keep her pursuers from guessing that she was on to them. It was very complicated!

At the gates she hesitated, turning her head this way and that. The question was, which way should she lead them? Eventually she meant to take them to the little temple above the pond, but in the meantime she had half an hour to kill.

From one of the ground floor windows of the cottage a beam of light was streaming out. Crouching over, she ran across the intervening grass and peered over the sill. Surely, if anybody were watching her, this would seem like a natural act!

Riever and Delehanty were within the room. Delehanty had fallen asleep on a couch. Riever was pacing up and down. There was no strut in him now; he was not on parade. He moved with his more natural catlike tread, but he was a cat with a load on his back. When he turned at the far end of the room, and Pen saw his face, his features were composed enough, but in his eyes showed a wild, animal-like torment.

Her soft heart was hard against him. Whatever he might be suffering, it was only a tithe of what he owed. The swiftest of glances was sufficient for her. She dropped to the ground like a leaf, and, creeping around the corner of the house, made for the road in front.

Running by fits and starts, she went

down the hill to the beach. She lingered in the shadow of a bush, looking out. Nothing human stirred. There was a breeze from the southeast, and from the other side of the point came a murmur of waves on the beach; but within the scimitar curve of white sand the water was like a mirror.

Three hundred yards offshore the Alexandra floated, huge and ghostly in the moonlight, all dark except for her riding light. Out in the bay the red light on Poplar Point flashed intermittently. Out of the vast, gray stillness that recurring spark had a dreadful significance, like blood.

Pen retraced her steps more slowly up the hill. If any one had followed her so far, he would have to let her pass him now. He would be hidden somewhere beside the road.

The thought made her heart flutter. Though she had deliberately provoked it, there was a terrible excitement in being hunted. As she walked, she kept her head fixed straight ahead, but her darting eyes searched among the bushes on her left. On the other side was a cut bank which afforded no cover.

And then she saw one of them. There could be no mistaking it—in the darkest shadow, under the branches, the suggestion of a crouching human figure still as death. She could even tell that he was holding his head down to keep his white face from betraying him. He was less than ten feet from her. It was terribly hard to keep her muscles in order as she passed, and just after she passed; but satisfaction was mixed with her terror. Her ruse had not failed.

Leaving the gates on her left, she kept on around the turn of the road. Here she sought to play with them further by running again—running as hard as she could along the fence that bounded the vegetable garden. Looking over her shoulder, she had glimpses of two pursuers, bent double in the road, and darting from shadow to shadow. She took them a quarter of a mile down the road, and brought them back to the point where her own path struck off behind the cottage into the woods.

At this point she hesitated for a long time, looking all around her, like a person wishing to make finally sure that she was not followed. As long as she stood still, nothing stirred, of course.

Suddenly she put her head down and ran like a deer for the woods. As soon as

she was within cover, she stopped and looked back. Her pursuers were startled into showing themselves openly on the path—three of them.

Pen ran on to the little temple, and flung herself down to recover her breath and await developments. She sat within the little circle of pillars, with an arm flung across the cool gravestone and her cheek pillowed on it. It was quite dark there.

Nothing happened. Nobody came plunging after her into the little opening. Not a sound was to be heard.

The excitement of being chased died down, and a chill of apprehension struck to Pen's breast. What were they up to? They couldn't possibly see what she was doing in the little temple. Why didn't they find out, then? The suspense became unbearable. Each minute was an age. She could have screamed aloud.

Then she heard a twig snap—not in the direction of the path by which she had come, but on the other side of the clearing. It instantly became clear to her what was happening, and her breast quieted down. She heard other whispers of sounds—the brush of leaves against a passing body, a released pebble rolling down the bank.

Naturally, if they thought Don was in there with her, they had to take precautions. Perhaps they had sent for help. Certainly they were now surrounding the place.

Then absolute silence fell again, and moment by moment Pen's breast became tighter. It was worse now, because she could feel the presences around her. Why didn't they do something?

Suddenly a wicked little thought occurred to her. She smiled, and at the same time shook with fear. She commenced to murmur half audibly to herself. It was only a nursery rime, but she meant it to sound like conversation.

It worked. A dazzling white beam suddenly flashed in her face. Pen screamed and scrambled to her feet. She did not have to act that; but oh, it was a relief to have it over with!

As she stood up, other lights were thrown on her. She could see nothing for the shifting, blinding circles. Some were held on her, others ran all over the place like quicksilver, like scrambling devils of light nosing in the corners. One even ran around under the dome, as if it expected to find Don clinging there like a bat.

From behind one of the glares came Delehanty's growling voice:

"Where is he?"

"Who?" said Pen, cool enough now.

He checked an oath.

"You know who I mean!"

"I am alone here," said Pen.

"What did you come here for?"

"To pray," she said demurely.

"Ha!" He was hard put to it to control himself. "What place is this?"

"The tomb of my ancestors."

Somebody threw a light on the grave-stone. The beautifully carved Gothic script was sharply outlined. A voice began to read:

"Here lies the body of Pendleton Broome, beloved son of Pendleton Broome and Mary Camalier, who departed this life—"

"Shut up!" growled Delehanty. To Pen he said: "Look here, I want a straight answer—what are you doing here?"

"I always come here when I wish to be alone," replied Pen, with delicate emphasis.

"Ha! Mitchell!"

He conferred with one of his men. Pen, still blinded by the lights, could not see what was going on. A man edged around behind her. Delehanty, who had put away his light, was busy with something in his hands.

"Now!" he said abruptly.

*(To be continued in the November number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

Pen's arms were suddenly pinned to her sides. As she opened her mouth to protest, Delehanty pressed his twisted handkerchief between her teeth. Pen struggled furiously, but it was pulled tight and knotted behind her head.

"Get back in your places," Delehanty growled to his men. "She's evidently got a date with him here. He'll be here yet. If you let him slip through your fingers, by Gad, I'll have you all broke!"

Pen, hearing this, ceased to struggle, and smiled behind the gag.

"Well, let them!" she thought. "It's all to the good!"

"March, young lady!" Delehanty summarily ordered.

Pen, just to keep up appearances, moaned behind the gag, as if in dire distress, and hung back. Delehanty pushed her ahead of him in the path.

"Get along back to the house with you!" he commanded.

Pen made no further objections. He accompanied her back to the house. Reaching the porch, he took off the gag.

"Thank you," said Pen demurely.

"Get inside," he said. "You won't be feeling so flip in the morning!"

He strode back toward the gate, but there was no certainty in his carriage. He suspected that he had been fooled. Pen all but laughed aloud.

## A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

WOULD I were sleeping there!

How green it is, and filled with peace!

And many a face still fair

Dreams underneath the trees;

And oh, the rest, the rest!

Would I were sleeping there!

Nought should I have to do

But lie and smile,

Dreaming, beloved, of you;

Thinking how over the meadows

Your feet go;

And nothing should I know, or care to know,

But once my lips did kiss,

Among the summer shadows,

Your eyelids and your sanctuary breast—

Nothing but this,

And rest!

*Oliver C. Moore*



# The Opening Chapters

A STORY WHICH SETS FORTH DIVERGENT VIEWS UPON THE  
GREAT PROBLEM OF MARRIAGE

By John H. McDaniel

**R**ICHARD CASTERLEY was in love with Jim Graham's daughter. Jim Graham was serving a four-year term in Sing Sing for embezzlement.

It seemed to Dick that there was only one right way of looking at these basal facts of his situation; but this simple view of the matter was destined to receive several shocks in the course of his negotiations for Charlotte Graham's hand. I say "negotiations" advisedly. Most young men in love have only to secure the consent of the girl and find enough money to go to apartment keeping. It is quite otherwise when you wish to marry into a royal family, or to ally yourself with a criminal's daughter. The opening chapters are more complicated.

Dick thought a man ought to marry the girl he loves, and prejudices be damned! In the depths of his soul he probably knew this to be the magnanimous, manly attitude. There was no condescension in his outward bearing when he asked Charlotte to be his wife; but she turned on him fiercely, bristling with pride.

"I will never marry any one," she declared, "who doesn't respect my father as I do!"

If Dick's jaw fell, it is hardly surprising. He had expected Charlotte to say that she would never marry into a family where she was not welcome. He had planned to get around the natural objections of his parents somehow—the details of this were vague in his mind. Then he meant to reassure her warmly, and to tell her that personal merit was the only thing that counted with him or his.

He may have visualized himself as wiping away her tears and gently raising her to share the safe social pedestal whereon the Casterleys were firmly planted. The

young do have these visions not infrequently; but to be asked to respect Jim Graham, about whom he knew practically nothing save his present address!

"I don't remember that I ever saw your father, Charlotte," he faltered.

"He was the best man," said the girl excitedly, "the kindest, the most indulgent—that's another thing, Dick. I will never marry an indulgent man, nor one who will let his wife manage him. If it hadn't been for mother—"

She broke off abruptly. Dick tried to look sympathetic and not too intelligent. He had heard that Mrs. Graham was considered difficult.

"I oughtn't to say it, but I can't explain father unless I do. Mother nagged; she wanted more money than there was; she made him feel her illnesses, and our failings, and the overdone beefsteak, and the underdone bread. Everything that went wrong, always, was his fault—because he didn't have more money. We were on the edge of things, and she wanted to be in the middle, as she was used to being. Of course, she really hadn't been well, but I think it was mostly nerves," said Charlotte, with the terrible hardness of the young. "Anyhow, she might have just as well have stuck knives into him as to say the things she did. It hurt him—like knives. I could see him wince, and try harder, and get discouraged—and then, at last—"

The girl burst into a passion of tears. Dick tried to soothe her. Secretly, he was appalled by these squalid revelations of discordant family life. The domestic affairs of the Casterleys ran smoothly, in affluence and peace. Dick had never listened to a nagging woman in his life. He had an idea that such phenomena were confined to the lower classes.

"Don't you care for me at all, Charlotte?" he said.

The girl crumpled up her wet handkerchief.

"Dick, you're the most beautiful thing that ever happened—except my father. He was beautiful, too—indeed, indeed, he was! I'll never think differently. I can't. He tried so hard!"

All the latent manliness in the boy came to the surface and showed itself.

"Charlotte, darling, I don't want you to think differently. It's right for you to be loyal and feel as you do. You know, and the world doesn't. I'll take what you say and do as you wish. You mustn't think I'm on the other side. I'm not—I'm on your side, wherever that is. When the time comes, I'll show you. You may trust me, Charlotte!"

He was eager, pleading, earnest. At the moment he looked so good, so loving and sincere, that the girl, out of her darker experience of life, wondered wistfully if it were really true that Providence ever let people live their lives out like that—just being good, and prosperous, and generous, advancing from happiness to happiness, instead of stubbing along painfully, as she felt she had done, from one bitter experience to another, learning to live by failures.

It must be beautiful to learn from successes instead, as it seemed to her Dick had done. How could any one refuse to share such a radiant life when it was offered? As for loving Dick, that was a foregone conclusion. Still, she hesitated.

"You're awfully dear and good to me, Dick," she said; "but I want you to see father. I want you to go and talk to him about this, and know him for yourself. I know I'm asking a hard thing of you, but, truly, I believe it's best. If he says it's all right for me to marry you, I will—if your family want me, of course," she added as an afterthought.

"Oughtn't I to speak to your mother?" hesitated Dick.

"Oh—mother? Yes, I suppose she'd like it," said Charlotte absent-mindedly. "Mother has views about getting married, Dick. I dare say she'll want to tell you what they are. You mustn't think they're my views, though."

"I'd rather hear yours, Charlotte."

She flashed a look at him that opened for him the heavenly deeps that lie before the young and the loving. He had a sud-

den vision of their life as a long, sunlit road, winding up hill, winding down, but sunlit always—because looks like that illumine any dusk.

"I'll tell you my views—some day," Charlotte answered softly. "But first—"

"First I must talk to my father, your mother, your father." Dick checked them off on his fingers. "Three of them. Seems to me that's a lot of people to consult about a thing that doesn't really concern anybody but you and me!"

## II

AFTER the fashion of self-absorbed youth, Richard never noticed Mrs. Graham especially. She had been to him simply a sallow little figure in the background of Charlotte's vivid young life; some one to be spoken to very politely, but otherwise of no particular moment.

If his marital negotiations did nothing else for him, they were at least opening his eyes to the significance of the personalities of older people.

The things Charlotte said about her mother prepared him to find that lady querulous and difficult, but essentially negligible. Face to face with her, he had a very different impression. She received him in the upstairs sitting room to which her semi-invalid habits usually confined her. Wrapped in a white wool shawl, and lying in a long lounging chair by a sunshiny window, she put out a chilly hand in greeting, and asked the young man to be seated.

Richard, scanning her countenance, received an unexpected impression of dignity. She was thin and nervous, with big dark eyes peering out of a pale, narrow face. She might be a woman with a grievance, but he apprehended something beyond mere fretfulness in the discontent of her expression. There were suffering and thought in her face, and even when the former is exaggerated and the latter erroneous, these are impressive things.

"Mrs. Graham, have you any objection to letting Charlotte marry me?"

"Mr. Casterley, what are your qualifications for the care of a wife and family?"

He hesitated.

"Why, about what anybody's are, I think," he said, and was immediately conscious of the feebleness of this response. "I mean," he added, flushing to the roots of his blond hair, "that my prospects in life are fair. I am in my father's office,

you know. I am to have a small share in the business next year. I needn't tell you that the firm is a good one. If you want to know about my qualifications as a lawyer—why, I can refer you to people who can tell you if they think I am promising."

"Do your family approve of this marriage?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"I haven't talked to them about it yet."

"Have you ever saved any money of your earning, or have you any property in your own name?"

He thought guiltily of his bank account, which had a surprising way of proving, when balanced, to be less than he expected.

"Well—not exactly."

"In other words, then, Mr. Casterley, you are a young and absolutely untried man; you are in your father's employ, and practically at his mercy; you propose a great change in your life of which you do not know that he approves; you have no resources of your own, and you are not even sure of your earning capacity if your father's backing were withdrawn. In these circumstances you plan to double your expenses and to assume the whole responsibility of another person's life, comfort, and happiness. Do you think you have shown me that your qualifications are adequate?"

All this was more than a little disconcerting. Richard was used to being accepted as old Casterley's only son—which meant a cheerfully accorded background of eminence, ability, and comfortable wealth. It had not occurred to him to detach himself from that background and see how he looked when separated from it. He felt a little angry, and also a little ashamed, that he did not bulk larger as a personage, apart from his environment. Nevertheless, he answered her question honestly.

"No, Mrs. Graham, I don't think that I have."

She did not appear to rejoice in his discomfiture. She even seemed a little sorry for it, but she went on quietly:

"Don't think that I am trying to prove that you are the most ineligible young man in the city; but it is absolutely necessary that a man should stand on his own feet, and firmly, before he undertakes to look after other lives than his own. Otherwise there is nothing but misery for the women and children who depend upon him. It is a serious business, getting married."

"I begin to think it is," muttered Casterley blankly.

"I am not anxious to see my daughters marry," said Mrs. Graham. "The life is a thousand times harder than that of the self-supporting woman—harder work, fewer rewards, less enjoyment, less security. That is true even of ordinarily happy marriages; and if they are not happy—oh, the bitterness of them!"

She was speaking rapidly now, with energy, almost with passion. Richard, red in the face, subdued, but eager to refute her out of the depths and heights of his inexperience, held himself rigidly still and listened.

"Did you ever hear the epigram of Disraeli—that all men should marry, but no women? That is what I believe. At least, if the women should marry, let others do it—not my children, not my little girls! It is curious, but that is how we always think of them. When they are grown, they are often uncongenial. My daughter Charlotte does not love me deeply, nor am I greatly drawn to her now, as an individual, as a personality; but Charlotte was such a dear baby! I can't bear to have her suffer."

Richard started to protest, hesitated, bit his lip, and subsided. After all, did he dare say that his wife would never suffer?

The woman looked at him with hostile, accusing eyes, as if he incarnated in his youthful person all the futile masculinity in the world.

"Do you think a woman who has suffered willingly gives her children over to the same fate?" she demanded passionately. "I wish I could make you see it for five minutes as I see it. Why, you know nothing—nothing! Listen to me. The woman who marries gives up everything, or at least jeopardizes everything—her youth, her health, her life, perhaps, certainly her individuality. She acquires the permanent possibility of self-sacrifice. She does it gladly, but she does not know what she is doing. In return, is it too much to ask that she should be assured a roof over her head, food to her mouth, clothes to her body? How many men marry without being sure that they have even so much to offer? You yourself, of what are you sure? Is your arm strong? Is your heart loyal? Can you shelter her soul as well as her body? I know your father has money. Perhaps you can care for her creature needs, but that isn't all. For some women life is one long affront, one slow humilia-

tion. How do I know you are not like that?"

"Because I'm not, that's all!" said Richard abruptly, getting to his feet.

He felt badgered, baited, indignant, yet he could not tell this frail, excited woman what he really thought. There were things one didn't say, although Mrs. Graham seemed to ignore the fact. She went on ignoring it.

"I know what you are thinking," she continued. "You are thinking that I would regard these matters differently if I had married another man. That is not wholly true. It is because James Graham was a good man at heart, and tried to play the man's part as well as he knew how, and because it was partly my own fault that he failed so miserably, that I have thought of it all so much. And the end of all my thinking is that I don't wish my daughters to marry."

Richard was white now, and a little unsteady. He was also confused. There was the note of truth in what Mrs. Graham said, but he felt that she said it with too much excitement, with too great facility. He had the justified masculine distrust of feminine fluency as being hysterical. Nothing so presented could carry full conviction. He felt physically bruised and battered, as if he had been beaten with actual rods instead of stinging words; but he was not yet defeated.

"Mrs. Graham, what do you wish me to understand from all this? Do you forbid Charlotte and me to marry—is that it?"

She looked at him dubiously. She felt so fiercely the things she had been saying that she could not feel them continually. She, too, was exhausted.

Richard Casterley had a fine head, candid eyes, a firm chin, strong, capable hands. He was young, and the young know nothing, but it might be there was the making of a man in him. If Charlotte must marry, perhaps him as well as another.

But Mrs. Graham did not trust her own judgment, even of such hands, such eyes, and such a chin. Oh, if the girls would only believe her, if they would only be content to trust the wisdom she had distilled from the bitterness of life! But the young know nothing, and believe only the lying voices in their own hearts!

"I wish you would see Charlotte's father," she said suddenly. "I am prejudiced. I ought not to have to deal with

these questions. I tell you, I pray Heaven none of them may marry—ever; but, just the same, they will! Go ask James Graham if he thinks his daughter Charlotte has a fighting chance for happiness as your wife. Let him settle it. I have told you what I think. I am through!"

"I shall be very glad to talk with Charlotte's father," he replied, with a certain emphasis on the word "father." "Perhaps he and I shall be able to understand each other better. Good morning!"

### III

RICHARD CASTERLEY, SR., turned his swivel chair about, bit hard on the end of his cigar, and stared at his only son.

"What's that?" he said abruptly. "Say that again."

Richard, Jr., winced, not so much at the words as at his father's face.

"I want to marry Charlotte Graham," he repeated steadily.

There was a silence. The elder Casterley looked at his son long and hard from under lowered brows. Dick had never seen his father look at him like that before—as if he were a rank outsider, some detached person whose doings were to be scrutinized coldly and critically, and judged on their own merits.

It is a hard hour for a beloved child when he first sees that look in heretofore indulgent parental eyes. Young Richard felt a weight at his heart, but he sat the straighter, and did not flinch before the appraising glance.

"So you want to marry Graham's daughter, do you? Well, now what is there in the idea of marrying a jailbird's child that you can find especially attractive?"

"Well, sir, I might say that I've seen something of business men—Winter, say, and Frank Field, and Sam Stillman—and that if it came to a choice between their methods and Graham's, his were the squarer, for he settled up, and is paying the price. But I don't know that there's any use in saying that. I don't want to marry any of their daughters, and you wouldn't want me to. You know what Charlotte Graham is as well as I do. If there's a girl in town that's finer-grained, or brighter, or prettier, I'd like to have you point her out! And she has a sense of honor like a man's. I don't know another girl like her in that. She knows what's fair," concluded the young man.



Mr. Casterley's face relaxed a little. His son was making a good argument with no mushiness about it, and he already had a well settled habit of appreciating Dick's arguments.

"She knows what's fair, does she? Then what does she say about marrying you?"

"She says she won't marry anybody who doesn't respect her father as she does."

At this the parent grinned a little—grimly, it is true, but appreciatively. He looked past Dick's handsome, boyish head, out of the window, and was silent for a time. When he spoke, it was gravely, not angrily.

"Richard, you're young. The things I'm as sure of as two and two, you don't believe at all as yet. Probably you won't believe them if I put them to you, but it's up to me to do it. Understand, I'm not getting angry and doing the heavy father over this. I'm just telling you how some things are in this world—facts, like gravitation and atmospheric pressure. Charlotte Graham is a good girl, I don't doubt. This world is chock-full of good girls. It makes some difference which one of 'em you marry, but not nearly so much difference as you think it does. What matters, from forty on, for the rest of your life, is the kind of inheritance you've given your children. You don't know it yet, but the thing that's laid on men and women to do is to give their children as good an inheritance as they can. Take it from me that this is gospel truth, can't you? Your mother and I have done the best we can for you and your sisters. You come from good stock, and by that I mean honest blood. You've got to pass it on untainted. Now—hold on!" He held up a warning hand as Dick was about to interrupt hotly. "Wait till I'm through, and then think it over. I'm not saying that James Graham's blood isn't as good as much that passes for untainted, or that Charlotte isn't a fine girl. I'm not telling you that. When first you look into your son's face, every failing of your own will rise up to haunt you, because you will wish for nothing on God's earth so much as that that boy shall have a fair show in life and be a better man than you. You will thank Heaven for every good thing you know of in your blood and in your wife's, and you will regret every meanness, every weakness, that he may inherit, more than you knew it was in you to regret anything. Do you suppose that when that hour comes to you, you'll want to re-

member that your boy's grandfather was a convict? How will you face that down?"

His son's face was pale. Richard had never thought of things like this. He made no response for a while.

"What kind of a man is Jim Graham?" he asked, at length.

"Eh? What kind of a man? Oh, well, as men go, there have been worse ones. He speculated, and he borrowed some of another man's money without asking, for twenty-four hours, to protect his speculation. He didn't lose it, either. There's a point where his case differs from most. He pulled the thing off, made enough to keep his family going decently, and paid the other money back; but they concluded to make an example of him, so they sent him up. It was just, yes, and he said so himself. At the same time, there are a great many more dishonest men out of prison than Graham, though he is in it. I meet 'em every day, and I ought to know. But that's not the point. As you said yourself, you don't want to marry their daughters. Heaven forbid that you should! You want to marry his daughter. He was weak. He was tempted and fell—and was found out. He is a convict, and the taint sticks. The Lord knows why the stain of unsuccessful dishonesty should stick longer than the stain of successful dishonesty. I don't; but we know it does. That is the way things are. Why not marry where there is no taint?"

"Father—"

"Yes, Dick."

"Father, see here. He was weak and gave way—*once!* Are there any men in the world who haven't given way at least *once* about something or other? Are there, father?"

There was a note of real anguish in the boy's voice. Perhaps he was being pushed too far. Richard Casterley, Sr., cleared his throat, paused, and at last answered somberly:

"God knows, Dick—I don't. I won't say there are."

"Well, then—"

"See here!" his father interrupted sharply. "Of course I see your argument. I won't meet it. I shan't try. It doesn't change my mind, even if it is a good argument. We'll never get anywhere, arguing along those lines. I'll propose something else. Suppose you ask James Graham whether you shall marry his daughter or

not? Yes, ask him. He knows what's what as well as any man. Ask Jim Graham what a man wants in the family of the woman he marries."

There was a note of finality in the older man's voice. Dick recognized it drearily. All roads led to Graham, it seemed.

He rose, oppressed with the sense that henceforward life was going to be full of unforeseen problems; that things which, from afar, looked simple, and easy, and happy, were going to prove quite otherwise. Mrs. Graham had angered rather than frightened him, and he had held his own with her; but this was his very own father who was piling the load on his shoulders and filling his heart with terror of the future. What was it, after all, this adventure of the married life, whereof these seasoned travelers spoke so dubiously? Could it really be that it was not the divine thing it seemed when he and Charlotte looked into each other's eyes?

He crossed the floor dejectedly, with the step of an older man, but at the door he shook himself and looked back.

"Say, dad!"

"Yes, Dick."

"Everybody is so terribly depressing about this thing, it almost scares me. Aren't there really any happy times for married people, ever? You and Mrs. Graham make me feel there aren't; but somehow I have a hunch that Charlotte and I know best. Own up now! Are you and mother miserable? You never looked it!"

His father surveyed him with an expression too wistful to be complacent. Ah, those broad young shoulders that must be fitted to the yoke! For what other end was their strength given them? Each man must take his turn.

"It's not a soft snap. I don't know anything worth while that is; but there are compensations. You'll see what some of them are when your boys grow up."

#### IV

ACROSS Richard's young joy fell the shadow of fear. If, as his heart told him, there was nothing to be afraid of, why were his elders thus cautious and terrified? He felt himself affected by their alarms all the more potently because his understanding of them was vague.

He groped his way in the fog. How much ought he to be influenced by Mrs. Graham's passionate protests and his

father's stern warnings? He realized all at once that the admonitory attitude of age to youth is rooted deep in immortal necessity. Like most lads, he had never thought of it before, save as an unpleasant parental habit; but fear changes the point of view, and Dick had begun to be afraid.

Then, again, before him loomed the prospect of his interview with Jim Graham. This was a very concrete unpleasantness. Hang it all! Charlotte was worth any amount of trouble, but still it was a tough thing to have to go down to Sing Sing and seek one's future father-in-law in his present boarding place! One oughtn't to have to plow through that particular kind of difficulty on such an errand. Dimly he felt that the path to the most beautiful should be rose-lined and soft to the feet of the approaching bridegroom.

Unfortunately, that didn't seem to be the way such paths are laid out. Richard resented this bitterly, but he set his jaws and proceeded to make his arrangements.

It was not difficult to compass the necessary interview. He knew a close friend of the warden, and it was arranged that he was to see Jim Graham in prison, in the library, quite by himself.

Richard dragged himself to that conference by the sheer strength of his developing will. Every fiber of his being seemed to protest and hold back. Consequently, he was not in the happiest imaginable temper for important conversation.

The prison library was a long, narrow room, with bookcases to the ceiling on one side and windows to the ceiling on the other. There were red geraniums on brackets up the sides of the windows, and a canary's cage on a bracket gave the place a false air of domesticity, contradicted by the barred sash. Beneath, there was a window seat, and here Richard Casterley awaited Graham's coming.

Dick did not know what he expected the man to be like, but his irritated nerves were prepared to resent and dislike Charlotte Graham's father, whatever he might prove. He held himself rigidly as he waited, and he could feel the muscles of his face setting themselves into hard lines.

When the door opened and some one approached him, he rose stiffly and held out his hand like an automaton.

"How do you do, Mr. Graham? I am Richard Casterley, and I have come—I have come—"

His voice trailed off into silence, for he had raised his eyes perfunctorily to Jim Graham's face, and the things printed there made him forget himself and the speech he had prepared.

He saw a massive head topping an insignificant figure. A fair man was Jim Graham, with heavy reddish hair, a bulging forehead, and deep-set gray eyes with a light behind them. His features were irregular and unnoticeable, but the sum total of them gave the impression of force.

It was a strong face, yet you could see that it had once been a weak one. It was a tremendously human face—a face like a battleground, scarred and seamed and lined with the stress of invisible conflicts. There was so much of struggle and thought set forth in it that one involuntarily averted one's gaze. It did not seem decent to inspect so much of the soul of a man as was shown in James Graham's face.

It was not at all a triumphant countenance, and yet there was peace in it. Somehow, the man had achieved something, arrived somewhere, and the record of the journey was piteous and terrible; yet it drew the eyes in awe as much as in wonder, and in pity not at all.

These things were startlingly clear to Dick. This was a prison. This might be a convict, but he was a man. He was a man who knew things, and who would share his knowledge. His wisdom was as patient as his suffering, and both stirred young Casterley's heart to its depths.

Dick's pride, his irritation, his rigidity, vanished in a flash. His fears were in abeyance. Only his wonder and his will to learn were left.

Graham did not take the offered hand, yet did not seem to ignore it. He came forward quietly and sat down on the window seat, half turning so that he and the lad faced each other.

"Richard Casterley?" he said. "Then you are Richard Casterley's son."

"Yes, Mr. Graham. My father sent me here—my father, and Mrs. Graham, and Charlotte."

At his daughter's name a light leaped into Jim Graham's eyes that made him look even more acutely alive than before.

"And what have you to do with Charlotte, or her mother?"

Here it was! The great moment was facing him. Dick caught his breath, then went straight to the point.

"I want to marry your daughter, Mr. Graham. We love each other very much; but—I haven't quite persuaded her, and I haven't persuaded Mrs. Graham and my father at all. They don't see it. They say things—all sorts of things," said the boy. "You would think they had never been young and—cared for anybody. They seem to have forgotten what it means. They try to make us afraid. How am I to suppose that they know best about Charlotte and me?"

Graham looked at the young man long and fixedly. Then a great kindness came into his beaten face, and a great comprehension. Dick, meeting his eyes, had a sudden sense of shelter, and felt his haunting fears allayed. It was absurd and incredible, but this man made him feel comfortable—yes, and eager to talk things over.

"They all said you would know. They sent me to you."

Jim Graham smiled faintly to himself. He had not left his sense of humor behind him in the outside world.

"They sent you to me, did they, boy? And what did they tell you to ask me? They had different motives, I take it."

"Rather! Charlotte said you were the best man she had ever known, and if you said it was right for her to marry me, she would. Mrs. Graham said I should ask you if you thought Charlotte had a fighting chance for happiness with me. She doesn't want Charlotte to marry anybody, you see. My father—my father"—Dick's voice shook with his consciousness of the cruelty of what was to follow, but he forced himself to steadiness and got the words out—"my father told me to ask you what a man wants in the family of the woman he is to marry. He said that you knew what was what, and that I should ask you what to do."

Graham's face was very grave, and his troubled gaze sought the floor. Richard, convicted of brutality and conscience-smitten, hurried on.

"And now that I've seen you, I want to ask you a few things for myself, Mr. Graham. I—I believe you know."

## V

THE man looked up and held up an arresting hand.

"Let me clear the way for you a little. It was a hard thing for you to come and

seek me out in this place. I like your coming. Most young men would have refused, or would have come in a different spirit. I want you to understand that if in Charlotte's eyes, and my wife's, and your father's, my counsel has value, it is because they think I see things as they are. That means, first of all, that I know myself for a man who committed a crime and is paying the penalty. I am satisfied to be paying it. As I see justice, it is just. So, if I seem to wince at your necessary allusions to it, that is part of the price. I don't want you to feel that you are blundering or hurting me more than is necessary. You have got to lay the thing before me precisely as it is."

Something in the words, in the dry, patient manner, in the endurance of the man's face, touched Richard to the quick. It made him feel all manner of new things, such as a sense of the moral poise of the universe, acquiescence in its retributions, and a curious pride, akin to Charlotte's own, in a man who could meet him after this fashion, in this place.

"Thank you, Mr. Graham," he replied. "You see, it's this way, sir. Mrs. Graham says—"

And he went on eagerly to set forth his new problems as they had been stated to him.

"Well, there you have it," he concluded at last. "For myself, the things they said opened chasms and abysses. Mrs. Graham seemed to think I would hurt Charlotte. My father seemed to think Charlotte would hurt me. Is married life something to be afraid of? When I look at Charlotte, I am sure everything is all right. It may be miserable for other people, but how could it ever be miserable for Charlotte and me?"

Again Jim Graham looked at the young man long and thoughtfully before he spoke. Dick felt himself measured and estimated, but not found wanting. When this man spoke, it was slowly and with difficulty, as if the habit of intimate, convincing speech had been so long disused that the effort was painful. The sentences seemed wrung out of him, one by one.

"They haven't the point of view," he began. "It is life that is the great adventure—not love, not marriage, not business. They are just chapters in the book. The main thing is to take the road fearlessly—to have courage to live one's life."

"Courage?"

Graham nodded.

"That is the great word. Don't you see what is the matter with your father's point of view, and my wife's? One wants absolute security in one way for Charlotte; the other wants absolute security in another way for you. Security—why, it's just the one thing a human being can't have, the thing that is the damnation of him if he gets it! The reason it is so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven is that he has that false sense of security. To demand it disintegrates a man. I don't know why, but it does."

The lad shook his head uncertainly.

"I don't quite follow you, sir. Oughtn't one to try to be safe?"

"One ought to try, yes—that is common prudence; but the point is that, whatever you do or get, you aren't secure, after all. There is no such condition, and the harder you demand it, the more risk you run. So it is up to a man to take all reasonable precautions about his money, or his happiness, or his life, and trust the rest. What every man in the world is looking for is the sense of having the mastery over life; but I tell you, my boy, there is only one thing that really gives it."

"And that is—"

Graham hesitated perceptibly. The thing he was about to tell this undisciplined lad was his most precious possession; it was the piece of wisdom for which he had paid with the years of his life. No man parts lightly with such knowledge.

"It comes," he said, with an effort, "with the knowledge of your power to endure. That's all. *You are safe only if you can stand everything that can happen to you*—then and then only! Endurance is the measure of a man."

The lad's chest swelled within him as he listened, and his face shone, for these words found his young soul where it lived. The chasms and abysses in its path suddenly vanished, and the road lay clear again, winding up hill, winding down, but always lighted for Charlotte and himself by the lovelight in each other's eyes. For surely neither Charlotte nor he could ever fail in courage!

"Sometimes I think it is harder to endure what we deserve, like myself," said Graham, "than what we don't. I was afraid, you see—afraid for my wife and all of them. Anyhow, take my word for it,



courage is security. There is no other kind."

"Then—Charlotte and I—"

"Charlotte is the core of my heart!" said Graham thickly. "I would rather die than have her suffer more than she must; but she must take her chances like the rest. It is the law of things. If you know yourself fit for her, and feel reasonably sure you can take care of her, you have a right to trust the future. I believe there is Some One to trust to. As for the next generation, God and the mothers will look after that! You may tell your father so from me. And you may tell my wife I think there is the stuff of a man in you. And Charlotte—tell Charlotte—"

He could not finish. The boy reached out and found Graham's hand and wrung it hard.

"I'll tell her, sir, that I feel about her

father as she does. I'll say that he approves of our venture. And I'll tell myself, always, what you've just told me. Why, it *must* be true! You needn't be afraid I'll forget—when the time comes for remembering."

Finding his way out of the prison yard, a few minutes later, Richard looked, unseeing, at the high walls that soared against the blue spring sky. He could not realize them, there was such a sense of light, air, space, in his spirit.

Apparently he was just where he had been an hour before, with all his battles still to fight; but really he knew they were already won, for his weapon had been forged and put in his hand. He left his boyhood behind him as he passed that stern threshold, for the last hour had made a man of him. A prisoner had given him the master key that opens every door.

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### LOVE'S BIRTHDAY

Your birthday, sweetheart, is my birthday, too;  
For, had you not been born,  
I who began to live, beholding you,  
Up early as the morn,  
That day in June beside the rose-hung stream,  
Had never lived at all.  
We stood—do you remember?—in a dream,  
There by the waterfall.

You were as still as all the other flowers,  
Under the morning's spell;  
Sudden two lives were one, and all things ours—  
How, we can never tell.  
Surely it had been fated long ago;  
What else, dear, could we think?  
It seemed that we had stood forever so,  
There by the river's brink.

And all the days that followed seemed as days  
Lived side by side before;  
Strangely familiar all your looks and ways,  
The very frock you wore;  
Nothing seemed strange, yet all divinely new;  
Known to your finger tips,  
Yet filled with wonder every part of you—  
Your hair, your eyes, your lips.

The wise in love say love was ever thus  
Through endless time and space;  
Heart linked to heart, beloved, as with us,  
Only one face, one face  
Our own to love, however fair the rest.  
'Tis so true lovers are—  
Forever hand in hand, forever breast to breast,  
On, on, from star to star!

*Richard Le Gallienne*

# Two Sides to Everything

THE STORY OF A GIRL WHO DANCED AND A MAN WHO  
MARRIED HER

By John Holden

**H**ORACE P. PEABODY was not a pessimist, but he had been born with a cast-iron spoon in his mouth instead of a silver one, and very soon thereafter he had learned that when the good things of life are heaped high on your platter, you had better watch out, for fate is probably lying in wait for you with a cock-tail of gall and wormwood. Observation and experience had taught him that there are two sides to everything—a bright side and a dark one; that every rose has its thorn, every flivver its stalled engine, and every courtship its moments of black despair.

That was why he was haunted by a vague fear that his affair with Mildred was too good to be true; that presently their incredibly rosy romance would bump into a bowlder; that one day he would wake up and find he had no more sweetheart than a gargoyle.

In the first place, Horace's meeting with Mildred had been brought about by the kind of good fortune that ordinary mortals can expect only once in a lifetime.

He had spent the greater part of his evening at the public library, improving his mind, as all ambitious office clerks of his class should. As he passed a brilliantly lighted dancing place, on his way toward his hall bedroom, the thought occurred to him that perhaps his feet could stand a bit of improving, too. He entered, and was introduced by the floor manager to three ladies with short skirts and white hair, who told him that he was a nice boy and stepped on his toes.

He was about to leave the place with his dancing ability impaired instead of improved, when his eyes alighted on a young lady who looked as good to him as a luscious ripe peach looks to a hungry way-

farer. She was surrounded by eager young men, who were obviously begging for dances; but that made no difference to Horace. He walked up to the floor manager, and asked her to introduce him to the pippin.

"I'll try," said that person dubiously.

She walked off and returned in a moment or two.

"No use!" she informed Horace. "She doesn't want to meet strangers. You might 'a' known that, with all them friends hangin' around her."

So Horace tried himself. He strolled by the group and overheard some one say "Miss Day." Then, as the music started, he turned and went straight to the girl herself.

"Pardon me, Miss Day, but isn't this the dance you promised me?" he inquired, with the calm assurance of a rent collector.

The peach gave him a puzzled look. Her admirers gave him belligerent ones.

"N-no," she said, as if she feared that, in dance hall parlance, she had got her dates mixed. "But the next will be yours."

Thus does boldness win—once in a thousand times, when a girl chances to have so many admirers that she cannot recall the appearance of all of them on five seconds' notice. Horace danced the next with her, and another one later on, and ended up by making an engagement to take her out the following evening.

There followed the kind of night's dancing that compensates a fellow for a whole year of tripping the heavy fantastic with leaden-footed ladies. Mildred did not dance, in the ordinary sense. She floated, rather, as responsive to Horace's lightest touch as a harp, as graceful as thistledown, as learned in new steps as a professional instructor.

And after that there were other nights of similar delight, until Horace commenced to comprehend for the first time why it is that poets, scenario writers, and popular magazines are all able to make a living by playing up the theme of love. The public library knew him no more; but nevertheless he kept on improving his mind—also his feet, his appearance, and his natural ability to talk like a house afire.

"It seems to me, Mildred," he said one night, just two weeks after he met the daintiest and most winsome girl in all the world, "that our meeting was so providential that there must be something behind it all. It must be destiny, you know; the finger of fate guiding two footsteps into one path—I mean two pairs of footsteps—no, what I really mean is, let's get married!"

"All right!" said Mildred.

Just like that! Just as if he had asked for a million dollars, and the currency had been tossed into his hat! No protest that she did not know him well enough, no old-fashioned remarks about his declaration being so sudden, no questions about his ability to support her, no shillyshallying at all, but a plain acceptance of his proposition in two words, one of them a mere three-letter word at that! It was such an incredible stroke of good fortune that Horace could scarcely believe that she meant what she said.

But she did. They were married next day at the Municipal Building. Then they went to hunt for an apartment to live in and some installment furniture.

And still Horace's marvelous good luck did not desert him. That very morning he found a suitable apartment at a moderate rental, and in the evening their furniture was delivered. They bought an outfit of cooking utensils and groceries, and Mildred announced that she would prepare breakfast in the morning.

That would be the point at which his good fortune would desert him, Horace figured. Chances were that she would not be able to boil water. To expect otherwise would be to expect all the blessings of earth, with a few heavenly ones thrown in for good measure. He was fully prepared to chew sole leather in the guise of hot cakes, and to drink a poisonous brownish mixture that his bride would fondly refer to as coffee.

Even so, luck would still be his in overflowing abundance. He resolved to praise

her cooking, even though he died of ptomaine poisoning the next minute.

But again he was surprised. Mildred could cook! Her coffee was almost as good as the description on the package; her hot cakes were better than mother ever made. The bacon was crisply delicious; the fried eggs were cooked on top without being leathery on the bottom. And, added to this, the napery and "silverware" that had been hastily gathered up at a ten-cent store gave the breakfast table the appearance of those that you see when you peep into the Ritz dining room.

"They're wool worth the money," Mildred declared, in reference to the ten-cent silverware.

Once more Horace glowed with inward satisfaction. That was the kind of bride to have—beautiful, charming, competent, witty! He wondered again what he had ever done to deserve so rich a reward at the hands of fickle fortune.

"Do you realize, dear, that I don't know who you really are?" he asked her once. "We've always had so many other things to talk about that I haven't had time to ask who your parents or relatives are, or even where or how you used to live before that never-to-be-forgotten night when I asked you for a waltz without knowing you."

"I knew you didn't know me," Mildred replied.

"You did? Then why did you consent to dance with me?"

"Liked your looks, I guess. There was something about you, even at first sight, that sort of told me you were the one and only. And then your approach was so bold and clever!"

She prattled on about love at first sight until Horace forgot that she had not answered his question. A day or two later he remembered this.

"Do you realize, dear, that I don't know who you really are?" he asked for the second time.

"I'm me," said Mildred with a charming pout. "Don't you like me?"

"Yes, but—"

"Run out and bring me some ice cream for dessert, there's a good hubby!"

Horace ran, and brought, and liked being called a good hubby so much that bothersome questions did not trouble him for several days. Then he began once more:

"Do you realize, dear—"

"That if we don't hurry we'll be late

for 'The Wicked Wedding,' or whatever that new movie is? Yes, I do realize it, Horace. Hurry!"

## II

So days grew into weeks, and still Horace did not know any more about the past life of his bride than a herring knows about hair nets. She evaded his casual questions on the subject, and he was lazily content to let her do so. The present was so delightful that he saw no reason for delving into the past. Why should he worry because her father might be a hootch hound, or her mother took in washing, or even if she herself had once been an extra in the pictures?

One day Horace lost his job, on account of the growing depression in all lines of business; and now he thought that surely he must face the rough side of his romance. But no rough side developed. His wife, instead of being a burden, was a help.

Not only did she keep the cost of living down to what he had previously paid for a hall room and catch-as-catch-can meals, but she saved him bills for clothes pressing and repairing, and laundry, and other incidentals. Her encouragement was invaluable and her advice was good, too. She insisted that he should put his quest for employment upon a business basis; that he should eat, sleep, and seek amusements the same as heretofore; that he should go to work at his business of job hunting at nine o'clock in the morning, and quit at five in the afternoon.

In less than a week Horace found precisely the position that he wanted. At three o'clock in the afternoon he went home to report the good news.

He rang the bell in his accustomed manner, but the response that he got was not the accustomed one. For the first time in his incredibly happy married life, his wife did not open the door.

A sudden sense of apprehension smote Horace as he unlocked the door and stood gazing about the empty apartment. How cold and still and dreary the place looked! Without the vitalizing presence of the one girl in all the world, it was as uninviting as a tomb.

He noticed for the first time that the furniture was not quite so good as it might be; that more pictures were needed on the walls; that a phonograph and a table lamp were almost necessities. Heretofore the

apartment had always appeared to be well furnished.

He sauntered about in a disconsolate manner. The keen edge of his job-hunting triumph was blunted; and yet he realized that it was an absurd thing to worry about Mildred's absence. It was mid afternoon, and that is the favorite gadding time for all married women.

For the lack of something better to do, he looked casually into the clothes closet. Fresh apprehension chilled Horace as he realized that Mildred's best dress was missing—her best shoes and stockings and hat, too! The old suspicion that his romance was too good to be true struck him like a blow in the face.

Then his blood turned to ice water as he picked up a card from the floor of the clothes closet. "Carnival Dancing Palace"—that and an address on Broadway was all that was printed on the card. It was enough! Horace slumped into a chair and sat there like a wet dish rag, as jealous thoughts streaked through his brain.

That was where his wife was—at a dancing place! There could be no doubt that she had inadvertently dropped the card. He saw now why she had worn her best dress. He remembered that she had always evaded his questions regarding her past. Was she deceiving him?

After a while Horace took a more sane view of the situation. What if Mildred had gone dancing with some girl friends? Nothing so terrible about that—nothing to get excited about.

As his old faith came flooding back upon him, Horace felt ashamed of the horrible suspicion that had momentarily possessed him. He would join her at the dancing place, and together they would celebrate his good fortune. He picked up his hat, called himself a suspicious fool, and fared forth into the sunshiny afternoon.

## III

CARNIVAL DANCING PALACE proved to be a large and gayly decorated place of medium class. Signs proclaimed that gentlemen visitors would be introduced to suitable partners by the floor manager; also that instructors could be secured by those who desired to learn. A good orchestra was throbbing out a popular number. On the floor a comparatively small number of dancers waltzed—some as gracefully as marsh reeds in a breeze, others with all the



delicate finesse of an elephant. Between the entrance and the floor a large area was given up to tables, and it was toward these and the floor beyond them that Horace directed his questing gaze.

He did not catch sight of Mildred immediately. Some girls who looked like her were dancing with one another in lieu of male partners, who seemed a bit scarce; but his wife was not among them. He glanced at the clusters of femininity grouped here and there at the tables, but again he failed to catch sight of Mildred. Then he looked more carefully at the floor beyond.

The sight that met his eyes caused him to sink into a chair with a far more poignant sense of disaster than he had experienced at his first suspicion of his wife's fidelity. There she was, gayly attired and smiling in the fascinating manner that he knew so well—smiling at a man old enough to be her father, a richly garbed, coarse-featured person who only too obviously was exulting in his possession of the most beautiful girl on the floor.

And it was not because she was enjoying her dance that she smiled! That was the sickening thought that capped the climax of Horace's mad jealousy. No girl on earth could extract genuine enjoyment from tripping a measure with that man. The fellow's feet were as heavy as tombstones. He lumbered around like a dray wagon on a motor highway. Every now and then he stopped altogether, to catch his breath and wipe his face; then he would heave into the motions again. And through it all Mildred smiled. Why? Why does any girl ever pretend to be enjoying herself with a rich old pleasure-seeker?

As the hot blood came flooding back into Horace's ghastly white face, he answered his own question in a manner that caused his lips to narrow to a thin slit, his usually mild eyes to flash blue fire, his competent fists to clench and quiver.

He had been right! His old vague fear had not been unreasonable. His incredibly fortunate romance had, after all, been too good to be true. There were two sides to everything, and now, for the first time, he was seeing the darker side, the pitch black side, of an experience that had been too beautiful to last.

What to do? That was the question. His first wild impulse was to rush up to the stranger and drag his wife away by physi-

cal force. He started to do it, too—started to his feet and took three tigerish steps. Then his reasoning brain took possession of his body again, and he sank into another seat.

Was he doing the right thing? Was there not a chance—a faint one, indeed, but a chance, nevertheless—that he was mistaken?

Could Mildred's partner be some relative? The man did not look in the least like her, therefore he could not be her father. It seemed improbable that she would go to such pains to entertain any other male relative; and yet it was not impossible. Horace had better wait, better keep away from Mildred and her companion, because if he faced them he might not be able to retain his self-control.

So Horace returned home. He flung himself on the couch and tried to think of legitimate reasons for Mildred's presence at the dancing palace.

None that absolved her entirely came to him. No matter who the man was, Horace could not view with equanimity the spectacle of her entertaining a prosperous-looking stranger while, for all she knew, her husband was still tramping the streets in search of employment. At best, Mildred was treating him shabbily; at worst—he tried to thrust the horrible suspicion out of his mind as a dreamer struggles to fight off a nightmare.

#### IV

MINUTES seemed like hours as Horace waited for his wife to return. Five o'clock came. The dancing palace closed for the afternoon at that hour. She would probably come home, if she came at all, about half past five. Horace took to pacing up and down the floor like a caged lion.

Before he realized it, Mildred was in the room, and her arms were around his neck. He wanted to pull away from her kiss, but he did not quite succeed. He wanted it too badly. No matter what she was, she was still the girl he loved. Her embrace thrilled him from head to foot, putting new life into his frame and new pathos into his countenance. His sharp-edged anger had given way to sadness.

"Honey boy," she said in the tender tone that he knew so well, "you lost out again, didn't you? I can tell from your dejected look. But cheer up! Wait till you see the dinner I'm going to cook you!"

She flung off her best gown without a word as to why she had donned it, and, attired in gingham, commenced to clatter pots and pans.

"Run out and get me something," she coaxed. "There's a dear. And here's your reward in advance."

She gave him another kiss.

Horace went out, and returned, and presently he sat down to the tastiest dinner of the week. Still he said no word of the terrible thing that was on his mind. He wanted to enjoy the sunshine of Mildred's smile a few moments longer before he let fall the brutal blow of his charges.

At last he could put off the fateful moment no longer.

"Mildred," he said, "you've been deceiving me!"

Mildred looked at him, startled.

"Why, honey, how could you tell that I only put one lemon in the pie when I usually put three?" she queried.

Horace did not smile.

"I saw you this afternoon," he stated calmly.

Mildred gasped.

"Where?"

"There!"

Horace handed her the business card of Carnival Dancing Palace, which he had picked up on the floor of the clothes closet. Mildred glanced first at one side of it and then at the other. Then she laid it down. There was a tragic pause.

Horace resumed in a calm, expressionless tone:

"I saw you on the floor with a man who couldn't dance, and you were smiling at him."

Another pause.

"You are right," Mildred admitted. "I was with a man who couldn't dance very well, and I did smile as if I were enjoying myself."

"Why?"

Horace's passion was getting the better of him again. His question cracked like the lash of a whip.

"Because you are out of work, dear, and we need the money."

Horace sprang to his feet and smashed his teacup down on the table in front of him, where it shattered into a thousand bits.

"Curse you!" he cried. "Do you think I want to see you taking money from any man to support me? What do you think

I am? And I've got a job, anyway! You—you—"

His voice trailed off into a sob as he collapsed into his chair again, his head on his arms, his shoulders heaving under the stress of his emotion.

"Why, Horace!" Mildred was beside him, gently stroking his head. "What I did was all right. Under the circumstances you shouldn't blame me. Lots of girls earn money that way. It's all right, I tell you!"

Horace glared at her.

"How is it all right?"

"I'll explain, if you'll let me. I was passing Carnival Dancing Palace, and I saw that card stuck in the door. I read it, and immediately I realized that I could earn a little money each afternoon, while you are looking for work. A nice-looking girl who dances well can make extra money at lots of the dancing places, Horace; so I went in and made the necessary arrangements. Then I came home for my best dress, and, being in a hurry to get back, I must have dropped the card where you found it."

"Fine!" Horace's tone was bitter. "That's just as clear as mud. You've explained nothing!"

"Look at the card more carefully, dear, and perhaps you'll understand."

Mildred handed the fatal pasteboard back to Horace.

"I have already looked at it carefully," he snapped.

"Ah! But not at both sides of it, hubby mine! More than once I have heard you say that everything has two sides, a dark one and a bright one. A card also has two sides. Usually the reverse is plain white, but not always. People sometimes write on that side. In this case you looked only on the dark side of the card, where the printing is, and you let a silly suspicion run away with you. Now look on the other side—the bright side—and I think you'll see that it is possible for a girl to dance with a man for money at a regular dancing place, and still be the most faithful kind of a faithful wife!"

Horace flicked the card over. As he read the few words roughly printed there with a pen, his expression betrayed, in swift succession, amazement, chagrin, pleasure, pain, and finally the bliss that had been his on their wedding day. For the words were:

WANTED INSIDE—A young lady of good appearance as dancing instructor.

# Kin Lee

## THE STRANGE STORY OF AN AMERICAN NAVAL OFFICER AND A CHINESE ROOM BOY

By Philip M. Fisher, Jr.

"IT is called the Society of Ancestral Loss," continued Buckley. "There are not ten white men in all China, besides myself, who know that it exists, who have ever heard its name, or, hearing and knowing the Chinese, would believe in its existence."

He paused abruptly, and dropped his eyes, a sudden cloud shadowing his face. Then, as if intent upon some sobering recollection pictured there, he watched the trailing wisp from his cigar as it spiraled tremulously toward the little wardroom's pipe-lined ceiling.

His face tightened as the delicate, wavering wraith hesitated in the lower stratum of cool air that was drifting through our open ports from the lower reaches of the Yangtze. He frowned, as in quick pain, when it fought there for a moment, then was torn asunder and dissipated and utterly swallowed up by the calmly hanging upper levels of clouding blue.

Then he shook his head.

"It had life," he muttered. "Insignificant—yet in spirit, great. It tried—tried; yet its very greatness of spirit brought to it, even as to Kin Lee, oblivion."

A chair scraped. Buckley started, jerked bodily back to the present. A slight and apologetic smile hovered for a moment about his clean-cut lips. He waved his hand, as in explanation, toward the floating smoke above. He cleared his throat.

"Paris has its unknown societies. Some are good; some are—diabolic." The lieutenant's eyes flashed over ours. "It's not for nothing," he snapped, "that Shanghai is called the Paris of the Orient. Oh, yes! And this other thing—the Society of Ancestral Loss."

His voice was a bit husky, and he cleared his throat again.

"What was it started me on that line?" he suddenly demanded. "Of course! Some one asked—you, Dennison, wasn't it?—how a year on the Yangtze may affect a man. Slow him up? Sap his moral sense? Metamorphose a vandal into an aesthete, or a trifling ignoramus into a philosopher? Or, on the contrary, will it absolutely, callously—secretly, perhaps, but without reservation or mitigation—brutalize a man?"

"Oh, yes—the river will do all these things. Its motive is—God knows what; but its will is a paradox. It makes good and evil. It seems indiscriminate in choosing which. Doesn't care. Maybe just tosses a coin—heads, you're a saint; tails, you're the other thing."

"Perhaps it doesn't really change, but just brings out—tears out by the roots the real unvarnished character, and sets it naked for all men to see. Scratch a Tatar? H-m! Scratch an angel! The Yangtze may not, after all, wave a Circe's wand, but may simply apply a scalpel in the way of a long, skewerlike, Oriental finger nail. I don't know. I guess no man knows, or ever will."

"But there was one man—" Buckley frowned and paused shortly, the shadow of memory again upon him. Then he shook himself. "It won't hurt to tell now. Can't harm him, anyway. He's getting some retribution. The fellow's in Mare Island, doing twelve years' hard. Hanging's too good." A slight pause. Then: "Too damn good!"

## II

THE last three words were crackling with heat. The lieutenant's jaw snapped over them as if they had scorched his mouth in passing. He tapped the green felt of the wardroom table with whitened

knuckles, and I felt the tenseness of a great potential of indignation within him.

I wondered what would follow. It was my introduction. Here we were—two years' cruise ahead, and at once—mystery! By Heavens—China!

Buckley drew himself together again.

"Yes," he went on, as calm in the return of his musical drawl as if his vehement outbreak had never occurred. "The thing is called the Society of Ancestral Loss. It's not an old tong. Owes its inception, strange as it may sound at first, to the advent of the railroad in China. The brew of Western progress and Eastern stagnation contains many incongruous and heat-producing elements; and in that brew steel rails and ancestral bones decidedly do not mix.

"To a devotee of Confucius—and all the peoples of the eighteen provinces, whether Mongol, Chinese, Tibetan, or Manchu, are such—the ancestor ranks nearly with that old philosopher himself. Every home has its ancestral tablets, to which each day its members must, and do, kotow. Every new wife accepts the ancestors of her husband's house. They are hers, heart and soul; those of her blood, now that she is married, are not. With a power greater than that of the *paterfamilias* of old Rome, the oldest male of the family rules. His word is law. If he orders a son to strangle himself, that son does not rend his clothes and shriek 'Why?' He brings the long-nailed parental talon to his forehead and murmurs:

"Thy despicable worm entreats ten thousand times thy pardon that he should deign to ask—but when shall he take his polluting presence from thy honorable house?"

"And, godlike, the old man gives the date."

Buckley slowly looked upon us, and pulled thoughtfully at his cigar. Then he nodded toward the port.

"A week ago we found a body drifted beneath the gangway. The hands were bound with a silken cord—and so were the feet."

He paused impressively.

"Likely as not," he went on, with a slight gesture, "in his home village, far upstream, he had offended his ancestors; and thus he cleared the shame."

Buckley hesitated for a moment, his knuckles once more clenched white upon

the table's green. Then he shook himself again, and continued.

"Railroads run in straight lines. If in the West we tear down a building that the lines may undeviatingly pass, why not, in the East, a grave?"

"That's Occidental reasoning. It met, and conflicted with, Oriental philosophy.

"But finally old bones were moved aside; the little mounds that had protected them, by the tens of thousands, were leveled off. Fat priests said that the josses so willed, and that ancestral rights were glorified in the act.

"But the Chinese mind did not acquiesce. Those yellow myriads whose traditions and ideals were thus insulted and spurned and degraded knew the priests. They knew that the priests lied, and that the iron devil had bribed its way.

"The ancestral bones were defiled—the ancestral spirits were homeless, as good as lost. A Chinese without ancestors is hopeless of heaven, hopeless of hell, hopeless of fortune on earth, hopeless of being an ancestor himself—for who will marry an ancestorless man? He is hopeless, worse than dead, worse than if never born. With neither past, nor present, nor future—a living and pitiable mockery in a human shell; a nonentity, a life-endowed zero mark, a nothing—hopeless forever and ever throughout the endless eternity of time; and the relentless march of the iron devil had made myriads thus.

"Then a way was found. Speedily, as in all life in China, came organization of those bereft of hope; and thus the Society of Ancestral Loss.

"It began as a sincere and sorrowful body of tormented souls. It is now, perhaps, one of the most bloodthirsty curses of the land. It was pitiable; it is now diabolic. It was a blessing; it is now a menace, a thing of horror, and of the lust of greed and blood. Its business is to barter and sell the human soul. There are many who will buy. There are few who wish to sell.

"But if a man be desperate—and he must be desperate beyond human belief—he goes to an emissary of the society. He sells the spirits of his ancestors, and his own. He leaves with money, but branded between the breasts with the outline of an ancestral tablet bearing the ideographic symbol of the tong, and a sentence declaring that on the ninth day thereafter he must



die. He comes in the agony of desperation. He leaves with that agony magnified to the most extreme degree of utter hopelessness. He is lost, utterly lost—a hopeless nothing, doomed to die like a rat in the gutter—body and soul forever abandoned by his relatives, by his ancestors, and by his god.

"Some shortly go mad and take their own lives to circumvent their fate, knowing full well that even this is in vain. Kin Lee did not do this; but"—here Buckley's jaws snapped grimly again—"in my estimation, the white man who brought it all about is even more devoid of hope than was Kin Lee. Kin Lee, in the sight of God, at least, finds salvation. The white man, I pray with all my heart, is irredeemably damned.

### III

"You ask how the river may change a man? I tell you of this man; but, in telling you, I charge you that no man could change thus. The thing, though hidden, was always within him; the river merely brought it out.

"He was a product of the war. After it, he was ordered to the Asiatic as paymaster of the gunboat I then was on. He remained so until—it happened. He seemed a decent enough fellow, too; as kind a man as you will find.

"He came upon Kin Lee in Hankow, half starved ashore. Brought him to the ship, to be his room boy. We're allowed that out here, you know—compensation for what the Orient does. Kept him the seven or eight months until the—but I'll tell it as the thing occurred.

"Hardy—his real name, by the way; it's well for you to know it—had picked the lad out of the gutter, you see, and brought him out to the ship. Pitied him, you understand; felt a genuine compassion for him, the instant he saw the thin, ragged figure follow the crevice in the flagging of the road, bending eagerly at intervals to pick up and eat a grain of dry rice that had leaked from some muleteer's bag; for Kin Lee was starving. Hardy fetched him out, filled him with food, bathed him with green soap from the sick bay, had the pharmacist's mate examine him for crawling things and symptoms of infectious disease, then fitted him with old whites from the lucky bag and made him his own room boy.

"The fellow did all that. I want you to get that idea firmly—Hardy did it because

he pitied the lad, sincerely and whole-heartedly felt for his misery, and had the means and the will to alleviate it. I want you to grasp that point thoroughly. It shows the man's character—his surface character, at least—as it was when he first came to the river.

"Hardy could have had his pick of a hundred Chinese youngsters eager to come, and recommended by contractors ashore. Kin Lee was a starving waif. He took Kin Lee.

"He treated the lad well. As paymaster, his room was both sleeping place and office—quarters for his bed and his safe. He gave Kin Lee—through the voice of another room boy, who knew enough 'pigeon' to get by—directions as to the care of his room; the adjustment of the mosquito-screened wind scoops in the two portholes; the cleaning of his numerous pairs of white shoes; the airing, lest they mold in the damp river air, of the blue uniforms he would not wear during the long summer months; the manner of putting on a clean cap cover; the way he must arrange fresh laundry in the drawers beneath the bunk—all the score of petty duties that must be done on a ship. He added that of all things in the room the boy must be most careful of the framed picture standing on the desk, lest in dusting he should knock it over, break the glass, and harm the photograph beneath—a portrait of Hardy's girl back home.

"Oh, yes, in those days the fellow had a girl—a sweetly pretty thing, if the camera had not lied. He was quite mad over her. He had come out here to save money, you know, so that when he got back, and his time as temporary officer was up, he might leave the navy with a stake and marry her. Funny, what men are—came *here* to save money. Some do, of course! And Hardy, who had to save—but we'll get to that soon enough.

"I remember how, one day, Hardy came down to the wardroom all spruced up for luncheon—beaming all over with smiles. He chuckled as he sat down.

"'Funny chap, Kin Lee,' he said. 'Pon my word, I think he's fallen in love with my girl. I'll swear he has. Went to my room just now to clean up—been on the beach all morning, on duty—and there he was bowing before the picture, and rubbing his hands and shaking 'em together, with a kind of solemn grin on his face that made

me feel queer. Fancy Kin Lee in love with my girl! It's a fact, he is—I'll swear he is!

"Some one in the wardroom was polite enough to mutter:

"Can you blame him?"

Hardy grinned.

"Huh! He started like a thief when I stepped in. Great boy! A real find, 'pon my word he is. Great little lad—in love with my girl. Ha! Mighty good room boy, too."

"Which was true enough.

#### IV

"WELL, the early summer droned along somehow, and in the middle of August we shoved off down river for Shanghai. Expected to stay here until perhaps October, and dock, and refit generally for the winter—going up the river again then, to base more or less on Hankow.

"We were all glad to get down here. We'd all saved a bit against our arrival—one needs plenty in this Chinese Paris. Cameras, curios, cabarets—wine, women, and song—all come high, you know. And we're all foolish—imagine we must do things up right down here, or else we'd go mad. That's part of what the Yangtze does, I suppose—a small part, and comparatively innocuous.

"We talked of the Palermo and the Del Monte, of a certain black-eyed dancer down on Kiangtse Road, and of 3 A. M. at the Crest; champagne at sixteen Mex. per bottle—and, after a length of time varying with the average capacity of the crowd, beer at the same price. You'll see how the game is played.

Hardy would sniff at this.

"Thank the Lord I've a girl waiting for me at home!" he would say, banging the table with his fist. "I'll save my money for her!"

"We'd turn the conversation to the curios of the banner-hung native city—ivory beads at three dollars gold a string—we always talk prices out here; you'll get used to that, too—and jade in settings of the gleaming yellow of the pure element itself; pearls, lapis lazuli, amber, and all. We'd glory in the living peacocks of silken thread on satin of the most glowing black, from the Tonquinese shops of Szechuan Road. We'd exhibit bits of rare porcelain and china-ware from shops far out on Nanking Road, near where it turns off to the left toward

the French Club—stuff, the shopkeepers swore, of any emperor from the great Chien Lung back to the earliest Ming. We'd ricksha back in imagination toward the Bund, with a plunge into Foochow Road, and revel in all the streets that cross—silver and silk, and silk and silver, and silver again, and silk.

Hardy would laugh shortly.

"Bring on the junk wagon, Tony! I'm too wise for you! I'm saving my money for the girl at home."

"One day, when the engineer came back with his pockets full of Chinese currency, and heaped it on the wardroom table before us all, amid our yells of envious delight, he raised a scornful eyebrow.

"The money I take home won't be gambling profits from the Kaiangwan races, either," he said witheringly. "The bureau pays me well enough!"

"Yet I couldn't help but notice that his glance lingered now and again upon that varicolored pile of notes, and I hardly suppressed a smile at his widened eyes. He caught my look upon him once, and started. The blood came to his face, and he looked at the stuff no more. I chuckled to myself—money always looks good to a paymaster in the U. S. N.

Hardy left the table early that night, not staying for the usual cigarette. Later, when I went topside, I found him leaning against an awning stanchion by the life lines, staring wide-eyed at the city across the gurgling stream. When I spoke his name, and put my hand upon his shoulder, he swung about as if I had struck him a cruel blow.

"Thinking of the little girl back home?" I whispered stagily.

"His eyes fixed upon mine questioningly, doubtfully, for a moment. Then he shrugged his shoulders and spat into the water.

"What else is there to think of in this God-forsaken hole?" he returned testily, clearing his voice as he spoke.

"He turned abruptly, and in a moment more his stateroom door, a few paces down the deck, had closed upon him.

"Time went on. The first week in September passed. The chief lost all the money he had won, and more—and joined heartily in our railing laughter.

"You never can beat the ponies, boys," he chuckled one night. "They always get you in the end. But, Lordy!"—his face crinkled with the smile of him—"Lordy!

What sport they give you while your money lasts!

"And we laughed with him again, so contagious was his humor; yet my eye caught the paymaster merely twisting his lips slightly and tapping upon the table with his butter knife.

"But," cried the chief exultantly, 'here is one *real* chance!' He tossed half a dozen pea-green pasteboards upon the table. 'Yep,' he ran on, 'that's what they are—real chances!' His big blue eyes beamed upon us. 'Real chances—at big money, real—big—money!'

"He emphasized each of the last three words with his rather well shaped forefinger stabbing the tablecloth.

"The executive raised his eyebrow.

"Sweepstakes?"

"Righto, me lad! Righto! Sweepstakes they be.' The chief leaned over the table and waved his cigar to illustrate. 'The big November Sweepstakes! Twenty thousand tickets the club sells—ten dollars Mex. per ticket. And '—he leaned closer and almost whispered his enthusiastic climax—'the first prize is one hundred thousand dollars!'

"I'll admit it made my heart jerk a bit. Whose wouldn't? If a man could win a hundred thousand—

"I was about to demand more information when the racket of a scuffle out in the wardroom pantry interrupted. One of us pressed the button. The bell shrilled, a pan clanged to the deck, the disturbance abruptly ceased.

In answer to the summons came Kin Lee, very much agitated, swallowing hard, but evidently doing his best to appear unruffled and calm.

"What the devil's the matter out there?"

"The executive fixed a stern eye upon the lad. Kin Lee fidgeted.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Kin Lee fumbled about; then his eyes turned piteously to the paymaster. The latter smiled somewhat one-sidedly.

"Speak up, Kin Lee," he said.

"The little Chinese blurted.

"Othah mess boy say you spoilem tablecloth. Othah mess boy say you makem butter on tablecloth. Othah mess boy say you maybe makem hole in tablecloth with knife. Othah mess boy—'

"That'll do!" snapped the executive. "Don't let it happen again."

"Kin Lee's glance fell upon his master

again; then he left the room. The executive grinned at Hardy.

"That is some boy you've got, pay! The little devil was fighting for your honor out there.'

"The paymaster grunted.

"He's all right," he said shortly, and absently tapped the tablecloth with his butter knife again, his eye upon the engineer, who still held one of the green cards in his hand.

"The second week in September passed. We began to busy ourselves on the quarterly reports due on the 1st of October.

"In the paymaster there became perceptible a subtle change. His work drifted. He began to go ashore now and then in civilian clothes, though seldom before had he gone to the beach except on duty.

"Kin Lee, sleek and spotless white, was more and more his abject and adoring slave. No desk as shiny as the paymaster's, no sheet so neatly smoothed, no shoes so whitely clayed, no deck so spotless, no corners so sharply and so painstakingly broomed. The frame about the photo of the girl glowed with the wax the boy himself had bought ashore. No speck of dust ever showed on the glass. No other mess boy entered that door—that stateroom was the throne room of a god.

"Now that the god was more and more away from the ship, Kin Lee had more and more opportunity to make the throne room worthy of its deified occupant. Toward the beginning of October, the time the little Chinese had for this service was greater still. The paymaster was on the beach every afternoon now—left the ship immediately after luncheon, was back for chow at seven.

"We wondered just what the attraction was; but the man had become aloof, an individual apart, a being whose thought-trail was diverging rapidly and at an obtuse angle from the idle gossip of the mess, a mind whose armor plate no hinting projectile of ours could pierce.

"October drifted by. The paymaster began to avoid us. The river had begun its work.

## V

"ONE night he did not return to dinner, and anxiety was in Kin Lee's eyes as he served about the table. At nine o'clock the lad broke in upon our little game.

"Doclah!" he stuttered excitedly. 'You

maybe clome chop-chop. Bossee I t'ink he catchem sick. Maybe catchem die, maybe!"

"One glance at the working of the usually placid Chinese countenance was enough. The medico followed at the boy's heels.

"We looked at one another, and the game stopped for the time being.

"He's been off his feed lately," muttered the chief. "Been noticing it for a week now. Hollow under the eyes. Hope it's nothing serious with the lad."

"The executive's eyes met mine.

"I'm certain it's not overwork," he commented dryly.

"There was a pause, during which he shuffled and reshuffled the cards, staring thoughtfully at them the while, and frowning a bit as his pursed lips whistled a silent tune.

"His quarterly returns were three weeks late," he went on, as he very carefully arranged the cards for Canfield. "And now the dope is that the flag is coming down from Chefoo. Be here about the 1st. That'll mean more reports—more inspections. Can't fall down. Want to better our record—all reports in on the dot. You know what the C. in C. says about tardy reports."

"The chief's fist hit the table with a startling crash.

"I'll say I do! I was shipmates with him when he skippered the old Manhattan back in nineteen ten, out in the Mediterranean. Does he want reports in on time? Why, there was old Wildcat Greavy—remember him? Class of nineteen five? And he—"

"The engineer broke off suddenly, for the medico had returned.

"Well," he cried, "is he all right?"

"The doctor shook his head enigmatically.

"He says he's all right; said Kin Lee came down on his own hook. He says he's all right, but—the medico threw out his arms helplessly—he isn't. Pulse normal, temperature normal, respiration normal, but—"

"He sank into a seat and drummed upon the green felt of the table.

"Then what the devil's wrong with the man?" snapped the executive.

"The medico shrugged his shoulders.

"Hanged if I know. Physically he appears O. K., and that's all there is to it. This cursed Orient—"

"The executive frowned, and shuffled

his cards into a heap. Then he raised his eyes, scanned us all swiftly, and let them fall.

"Anybody any idea where he spends his time ashore?" he queried softly.

"We shook our heads.

"I imagine there were many unspoken conjectures to which no one, as Hardy's shipmate, cared to give voice. I know I had my guess. Since I first noticed the growing change in the paymaster, and began to put two and two together, it had assumed a stronger and stronger dominance in my thoughts. It was an idea I did not like to entertain. I would thrust it aside, forget it while immersed in my own duties and pleasures ashore and ashore. Then, at the first careless moment, up it would come again. It may seem strange that I should think so much about the man, but wait until you've been in daily intimate contact with just three or four other chaps for eleven long-drawn, monotonous months—on the river, the Yangtze. You'll understand it well enough then.

"To tell the truth, I had felt very kindly toward Hardy—his picking up the starving little China boy, you know, and his talk of the girl, and all; but his gradual change of the last month, his peculiar retirement from our wardroom play, and his even stranger neglect of work disappointed me. Now came this—well, this strange illness.

"The executive almost guessed my thoughts as he suddenly snapped the single word of his next question:

"Worry?"

"We all eyed him a bit tensely. The chief was the first to break the silence.

"Over what, boss?" he asked quietly.

"The executive shot him a look, hesitated, then plunged on.

"Ever see him out there?"

"I know I started at this. Well enough we knew what the executive meant; but the engineer's answer was positive.

"At the races?" He shook his head. "Never," he said.

"The medico interrupted with a straight look at us all.

"Let's play until eleven," he suggested smoothly, "and then turn in. Pay will be fit in the morning, I think. This cursed river gets us all sooner or later; but one gets over it. Whose deal is it?"

"His meaning, too, was clear to me. We played.



"Yet that night I, for one, did not sleep any too well.

## VI

"NEXT afternoon Hardy went ashore again, in civilian clothes.

"On the following day, the 24th, the flagship was piloted to a mooring buoy a little upstream—off the French Bund.

"Pay came back to chow that night. He was actually cheerful. We welcomed him as if he had been away for months. He spoke of the fun he had been having in the native city out beyond the Boulevard des Trois Républiques—in the Street of Birds, the Mandarin Garden, the old incense-fogged temple. He spoke of the girl back home. By Jove, when he got back with the cash he'd saved, they'd be married like that! He snapped his fingers. He seemed quite his old self.

"And yet—as I watched, and listened, and mused—he was different. I still could not help but put two and two together.

"Then the executive did a cruel thing. He chuckled, and with a smile, cried:

"How much did you win, pay?"

"Hardy jerked and blanched. His eyes narrowed, and a light came into them which I did not like. Then he shrugged his shoulders and turned to the big engineer.

"By Jove, chief, how *are* the races coming? The big one is pulled off on the 1st of November, isn't it? Going to win the sweepstakes? If you do, you're a rich man. Present rate is seven, two, point, one, four, eight, nine. Multiply it by a thousand, and call it dollars gold. And those six tickets you had! It was six, wasn't it? Hanged fine chance! If you had a thousand of 'em—an investment. Yes, sir, an investment.' He shook his head. 'Lordy, if I had the nerve! On the 2nd of November I'd be rich—rich, by Jove! Eight days from now—rich.' He sighed rather heavily. 'But I want only earned money to take home to the girl. Ha! No tainted stuff for her, old boy!'

"His outburst had no such enthusiastic response. There was a short silence. Then the executive himself, who never before talked shop at the table, began to question me minutely about the condition of the bilges, and the items lately written in the hull book, and whether the latter would be ready in case the old man sent some one from his staff over to examine it.

"Shortly after, pay excused himself.

When I went topside to get a breath of air before turning in, there he was again, as I had found him a month before, leaning against an awning stanchion, staring across the swirling waters at Shanghai.

"He went ashore again the following day, the 25th, and did not get back for chow. Next morning the medico told us that Kin Lee had awakened him toward midnight with a request from his master for aspirin—'Playmastah bossee wantee catchem sleep, maybe. I t'ink no feel good to-night'.

"The executive cursed softly under his breath; but no comment followed.

"Events came rapidly now. On the morning of the 27th I had occasion to see Hardy about requisitioning some charts. The door of his stateroom was closed despite the autumn heat. I was in a hurry, so I simply gave a quick knock, pushed open the door, and stepped in.

"There was a startled oath, followed by a flutter of papers; but the hurried attempt to hide was in vain. Though Hardy awkwardly contrived to lean over his desk and cover the evidence from my sight, I could not help but see three rubber-banded packs of pea-green cards among the papers there.

"I consummated my business very quickly, and went outside to think.

"Three packs of tickets! Why, there must be a hundred in each pack—at least a hundred. That made three hundred in all. At ten dollars Mex. for each ticket—good God! My heart dropped like a lump of cold metal within me, and I felt a sudden nausea. Three thousand dollars! Had the paymaster saved as much money as that since coming aboard the Wilena? Had he—had he—

"My brain numbed. Suspicion I had had before, but never this—never this. Three thousand dollars!

"Then, dully, I began to think. In his eleven odd months he could save so much, and so much only. I knew he had an allotment going home to his folks. Three thousand, even in Mex.! At the exchange rate he had quoted the other day, that would be over two thousand gold. Where had he got the difference between that and what little cash he could have saved? Where? The dreadful suspicion took more relentless hold. Hardy—paymaster—handling ship's funds—God, this cursed river!

"There was but one thing to do. I turned and walked into the executive's stateroom.

"He must have seen from my face that something was wrong. I had left him but a few moments before, and he knew my errand was with the pay.

"Sir," I started, "I'm afraid I have a report to make. I hope I'm wrong, but—"

"The executive's face went colorless. He stopped me with his raised hand.

"I was afraid, I was afraid," he whispered huskily. "I think I know what you have to say." He dropped into his chair and bowed his head in his hands. Then he brokenly reached for an open sheet of mimeographed paper. "Read this, Buckley—it came just now in the guard mail from the flagship."

"The letter was brief; but between the lines I could visualize Hardy's fate. It stated that the fleet paymaster would board us next Monday, November 3rd, to examine and audit the accounts of the Wilena's pay department.

## VII

"We finally came to a rational talk. We went to the captain with what we knew. There's no need to describe his first outburst. He calmed finally, and the decision was made to let matters run until the inspection took place. If all were well then, why, all was well. If not, why hurry what must at all events be tragedy? We would go on as if nothing were known.

"If Hardy had had money enough to buy three thousand dollars' worth of sweepstakes tickets, that was his personal affair. It was not up to us to pry into his personal affairs. If our suspicions were without concrete justification, we had made fools of ourselves, and a sad enemy, or at least a broken-hearted man, of Hardy.

"Yes, he must have been playing the races all last month, by proxy somehow, or in disguise—playing ever since the quarterly returns were in at the end of September, when he felt fairly safe. Doubtless he had lost some money, and even little losses would worry a man of his type. Then there was his cheeriness of a couple nights before. Simple enough—a big winning, a coup. All right, then, that might explain the three thousand. Let the matter rest. Let events take their course.

"Will you call him to your office, captain, and give him the letter from the staff paymaster?" I inquired.

"The captain decided to send it up to him, and a messenger took it away.

"Very shortly Kin Lee took coffee to the paymaster's room; then more coffee. The medico was ashore. I was topside all afternoon. For an hour Kin Lee was in Hardy's stateroom, the door closed. I believe Hardy confided in the lad. He had confided in him about the girl, you know. The Chinese boy was his, body and soul. He was loyal. He could be trusted. Now that the fleet pay was to inspect, a way had to be found. This was China, Kin Lee was Chinese. There must be a way. The shortage must be covered. Prison! The girl! Honor! A way *must* be found! More coffee, Kin Lee, damn you—get me more coffee!

"Kin Lee finally emerged from the stateroom. His face was pale and drawn. He took more coffee behind the closed door where sat his master with his three hundred chances in the sweepstakes.

"This time Kin Lee came outside almost at once. I still lingered topside—it happened I had the deck. A few minutes later Kin Lee came to me, in liberty whites—he had the paymaster's permission to go to the beach. He called a sampan from the stern. His face was strangely set as he stumbled down the gangway, but there was a look of exultation upon the yellow-gray features.

"He did not return that night; and the next morning, at breakfast, Hardy was not present. The medico explained that the pay had begged, late the night before, for something to make him sleep; and because the man looked so like hollow-eyed death itself, he had given him a shot of opiate. The chap was worrying himself sick about something, added the doctor. Had the girl turned him down? It's a long wait, you know, with your man gone for two years, possibly three, ten thousand miles away; and others can be persistent.

"The executive and I saw something grim and naked in each other's eyes. The doctor was unaware that the fleet paymaster was to inspect.

"Hardy did not appear until an hour or so after luncheon. He avoided us, and paced with uneven steps up and down the deck on the side of the ship nearest the Bund. Now and again, as a sampan neared the ship, sculling at an angle against the swirling, coffee-colored tide, he would abruptly stop and stare upon it with his hollow eyes, his hands spasmodically clutching. Then, as it discharged its passenger

at the gangway, or passed us by, the pacing would begin again—up and down, and up and down, and up and down.

"The doctor had been right. Hardy's face was more of the dead than of the quick. I stopped before him once, in genuine pity for the man, and asked him if he was ill. I believe at first he did not see me or hear my words of sympathy. I repeated them, and he seemed to jerk away.

"Yes, thanks, thanks! I'm quite well, quite well, thanks! Just a touch of insomnia—but quite well, quite well, thanks! Bit of river fever, perhaps; but I'm quite well—quite well—quite—"

"He peered across the muttering eddies of the Whampoo, and then, without a word of excuse, stumbled on.

"The hell you are!" I said to myself, and went about my business.

"Hardy did not go ashore that afternoon. He was waiting—waiting, pacing up and down the deck, up and down, up and down.

"Late in the afternoon he suddenly gave a lurch, and stiffened. A sampan was approaching the ship. Standing in the little cockpit of it, clutching the bamboo hood as it was lurched to and fro by the boatman's sculling oar, was Kin Lee.

"The sampan neared the Wilena. Hardy's hands were twitching, his face tense, as he watched the Chinese boy. Then Kin Lee gave a slight nod, his countenance as expressionless as only an Oriental can make it, but gray, a deathly gray, and pinched as if with pain.

"Hardy furtively glanced about him, then stumbled on with his pacing.

"Kin Lee made the gangway, and went straightway to the paymaster's stateroom. He could not entirely conceal an oblong, flattish bulge beneath his white jumper.

"Another turn about the deck, and Hardy followed into his room. The door closed, the lock shot home. We heard a loud peal of strident, half hysterical laughter.

"The paymaster appeared at dinner that night. He seemed wildly hilarious. Kin Lee spilled soup on the executive's clean white sleeve, but never knew that he did it. He moved as in a trance.

### VIII

"THE fleet paymaster found Hardy's accounts in perfect order, and checked the money, both the gold and the Chinese bank notes, to his entire satisfaction. This was on the 1st of November.

"About noon of the 7th there came sounds of a wild commotion on the stern of the ship—a sudden piercing scream, and then loud shouts. A seaman rushed forward, crying:

"A gun! A gun, or the devils will get away!"

"I jumped aft. A crowd of our men was tumbling into the huddle of sampans hooked to the taffrail. A swift two-oared craft was sculling rapidly downstream toward the side of the Whampoo opposite the city. On our deck lay a quiet body.

"I bent over it in dismay. It was Kin Lee, the white of his jumper crimson over the heart—a heart, my first glance told, which would beat no more; yet in vain hope I tore off the jumper and the shirt beneath.

"Then I realized the full love that little Chinese had borne for Hardy. Beside the tiny wound the assassin's sharp knife had left, there was another and an older scar. I knew at once that it had been made just nine days before. It was a miniature ancestral tablet branded upon the breast—the cursed trademark of the Society of Ancestral Loss.

"Kin Lee had found a way. His master's honor was safe; but he himself was irrevocably and eternally lost, body and soul—without hope.

"They took the boy's limp body, laid it before his master's room, and called for Hardy to come.

"You ask what the river will do to a man?"

"Hardy stared for a moment. Then he spoke; and as he stared and spoke, I at last comprehended how the river had brought out his real and long-hid character. It had stripped away the veneer that had made him seem a man; had left naked the inner ego that was Hardy, the thing which could accept the sacrifice that Kin Lee had made. For Hardy himself, you must know, had brought the first story of the Society of Ancestral Loss to the ship, months and months before.

"Why in hell do you bring this thing to me?" he whined. "It's nothing to me! Take it to the rail there, and heave it over the side!"

"And he turned back into his room, sat down before his desk, picked up a magazine, and started to read.

"Two days later we gave Kin Lee all military honors. His master did not attend the funeral."

# The Land of Turmoil

A STORY OF TO-DAY IN NEW YORK—ONE MAN'S STRUGGLE  
AGAINST THE ORGANIZED POWERS OF EVIL

By William Slavens McNutt

## XVII

**W**ATSON was unarmed. He could not think of fighting, and what possible chance of escape was there, with Arthur Leveridge coming up the stairs? If only he had a clearer idea of the plan of the house! He knew that he was on the second floor, and that was all. If he fled, he could not afford to hesitate, to make experimental excursions into this or that room in search of the way out.

He surmised that the door at which the servant had appeared led into a hall. Through that hall, he thought, might be his best chance of escape.

The windows of the room in which he sat were on the inside, with heavy wooden shutters, which the thick curtains did not altogether hide. Quick flight that way was out of the question. He must try the hall.

First he must silence the masked man and temporarily dispose of Leveridge, and perhaps also of the husky servant.

All these thoughts had their being in Watson's brain within the space of half a dozen seconds. For that time he was so intensely absorbed in the problem of escape that he was not conscious of exterior things. The masked man was speaking. Watson picked up the thread of his talk in the middle of a sentence.

"... My chief lieutenant, and one of the few who are permitted to know my identity. He is not a brilliant man, but he is a successful operator in the politics of the underworld. You'll find his advice valuable, Bergstrom."

Watson felt in the breast pocket of his coat, and then half rose from his chair.

"I'm going to change my mind and take one of those cigars," he said.

"Why, certainly."

The masked man turned and leaned a little to the left, to take a cigar from the humidor at his side. Watson lashed out with his right fist, catching his enemy on the neck, just under the right ear. The man of mystery grunted and toppled off his chair to the floor, stunned for at least the few seconds that were vital to Watson.

Watson whirled about swiftly and sprang toward the door leading into the hall. As he crossed the room, the door swung open, and Leveridge stood on the threshold.

Watson dived at him head first, just as a football player, making a flying tackle, dives at the runner with the ball. He crashed into him head first, groin high. As he struck, he encircled Leveridge's waist with his outflung arm, and at the same time slugged viciously with his right fist, catching his antagonist fairly in the pit of the stomach. He heard the sharp groan that agony forced from Leveridge's lips, and felt the man's body go limp.

As they crashed together to the floor of the hall, Watson caught a glimpse of the servant standing at the head of the broad, winding stairs. He saw the frightened expression of the man's face; saw him drop his right hand to his coat pocket, and guessed that he was reaching for a gun.

As he dropped to the floor with his arms locked about Leveridge's limp body, Watson fully knew his desperate need of a weapon. His eager fingers searched for, and found, a bulge in Leveridge's coat pocket, made by a short-barreled revolver. He grabbed it, tapped Leveridge smartly between the eyes with the butt, shook himself free, and rolled up to a crouching position, one knee and one foot on the floor, with the gun ready in his right hand.



The servant at the head of the stairs was only waiting for Watson to disengage himself from Leveridge sufficiently to offer a separate target. As Watson rose to one knee, he fired. Watson answered the shot even as he felt the breath from the other man's bullet hot on his ear as it passed. The servant spun sharply around and plunged headlong down the stairway, his right shoulder shattered by the lead that Watson had sent true to its mark.

As the servant toppled and plunged down the stairs, Watson heard shouts and the sound of men running on the floor below. In the room he had just quitted he heard the masked man, returning to consciousness, getting to his feet and calling to Leveridge to know what had happened.

At the far end of the hall was a long window, with its lower sill not more than a foot from the floor. Down the hall and out through that window was the fugitive's sole way of escape.

He saw that instantly, and ran down the hall. He was certain that he was on the second story, and there was a fair chance that the window might give upon the roof of a porch.

The space of a long leap distant from the window, he glanced over his shoulder and saw the masked man, revolver in hand, standing in the doorway of the room at the far end of the hall, and raising the gun to fire.

To stop, turn, aim, and beat him to the shot was impossible. To attempt opening the window was madness. The masked man could riddle him with bullets while he was doing it. To break the window and look before leaping out was equally foolish.

Watson's football training stood by him, as it had done before. Without halting his stride, he tensed and sprang head first, diving into the window with his arms wrapped about his head and face, affording such protection as they could. He might crash through the glass to land on a porch roof, and he might have a one-story drop to a fatal landing; but not to dive was to die. Better the ghastly chance than the ghastly certainty!

He felt the crash of glass on his forearms crossed over his head as he went through the window. He heard the sound of the panes shattered by his hurtling bulk, and, coincident with this, the report of the masked man's revolver.

The feel of a sloping tin roof under his

falling body was the first bit of good news that sensation telegraphed to his tense mind. He had gone through the window doubled up, drawn together as much as possible, to lessen the chance of injury. As he felt the roof under his body, he spread-eagled himself, pressing against the tin with outflung hands and feet, to stop his descent and avoid rolling over the edge.

He had not been wounded by the bullet from the masked man's gun. That was the second welcome flash of information that his brain received. He was outside the house, alive, unwounded, and armed, after being led in bound, blindfolded, and weaponless. A joyous thrill ran through him like an electric shot—the peculiar, exquisite ecstasy of triumph that rewards a courageous contestant when the breaks of a tense, touch-and-go fight are favoring him.

Watson sprang to his feet and looked back through the shattered window. The masked man was racing along the hall, his smoking revolver in his hand. A few more steps would bring him to the window. The fugitive raised his gun and fired, hitting the man in the right shoulder and putting him out of the fight—just as Watson had disabled the servant. The masked man toppled to the floor on his face.

Below him, on the porch, Watson heard voices. He had thought to leap to the ground from the porch roof, or to clamber down a supporting post; but with men ready beneath him he did not dare to do so. He could temporarily stave off a rush through the hall, but it would be an empty victory, for it would leave him on the porch roof, and from there he would surely soon be picked off by some one maneuvering on the ground.

The roof of the house was a fantastically gabled affair. The eaves were within reach from the porch roof, and the valley of one of the many gables offered a way up. Watson kicked off his shoes, stuck one in each side coat pocket, swung himself up to the roof of the house, and, on all fours, climbed swiftly, silently, to the peak. He slipped over and let himself down on the other side.

For the moment, at least, he was free from direct pursuit. He could hear the excited shouting on the opposite side of the house, as his hunters closed in on the spot where they still believed him to be.

He worked his way down the slope of the main roof to the ridge of a small gable,

straddled this, and, hunching himself along to the edge, peered over. He could see the driveway and two cars standing before the front veranda. Light from the house so illumined the driveway and the area immediately in front of the porch that Watson discarded all idea of getting to the ground that way.

A few feet out from the end of the gable on which Watson sat was the bole of a tall pine tree. He studied it briefly, made his decision, and rose to an upright position, his feet gripping the roof, one on either side of the ridge. He crouched, estimated the distance, swung his arms to gain momentum, and leaped.

His legs and arms went around the rough trunk in a desperate embrace. The impact of his body against the tree came perilously near to stunning him to the point of momentary unconsciousness; but he successfully fought off the faintness that assailed him.

For the space of half a minute he clung to the pine tree, not moving, regaining the full use of his faculties. Then he slid quietly to the ground, darted across a strip of lawn into the friendly shadow of some thick bushes, slipped on his shoes once more, and walked rapidly away from the house, paralleling the course of the driveway, but keeping fifteen or twenty yards distant from it among the trees and bushes.

The going was not easy. The driveway was of white macadam, and easily followed; but it was so dark in the shadow of the trees that rapid progress was impossible. Watson had been walking for perhaps twenty or twenty-five minutes when he heard the whir of a motor behind him, coming from the direction of the house he had quitted.

Hiding behind some bushes, he watched the machine—a heavy roadster—as it sped by, slowed sharply, and came to a stop about a hundred yards beyond. Its headlights showed Watson an iron gate in a high stone fence being swung open by a short, stout man in trousers, slippers, and shirt sleeves.

The driver of the car, a slender young man, alighted and spoke earnestly to the gatekeeper. From fragments of the conversation that he could hear, Watson knew that his recent escape and his present whereabouts were the subject of the two men's conversation. The driver was telling the news to the gateman, and the latter was

vigorously denying having seen or heard anything suspicious.

Watson carefully crept closer.

"I'm going on to town," the driver said, as he stepped back into his car. "Keep your eye peeled for that bird, and shoot to kill if you see him."

"If I see him, he won't make no trouble no more," the stout gatekeeper boasted.

The car moved ahead. As it started, Watson leaped behind the gateman and tapped him on the head with the butt of Leveridge's revolver. The man crumpled on the driveway.

The fugitive sprinted after the roadster, which was just passing through the gate. As the car swung around into the road, he leaped upon the running board, and, leaning in, jammed the muzzle of his gun against the driver's cheek.

"I understand you're looking for me," he said pleasantly. "Something you wanted to tell me? No? I'm sure you won't object if I ride with you!"

He opened the door, edged in, and sat beside the astonished driver, keeping the latter all the while under the muzzle of the gun.

"Just speed up a little now, and don't do any bad driving," he ordered. "You're going to New York, aren't you?"

"No," the driver growled.

Watson jammed the muzzle into the man's ribs.

"Aren't you?" he asked.

"All right!" the chauffeur muttered. "You don't need to stick that thing clear through me!"

They rode for a little time in silence. Then the driver asked:

"Did you get by the guy at the gate?"

"Looks like it," replied Watson.

"How did you do it?"

Watson laughed.

"Wait till we get to New York, and I'll show you," he promised.

They came south along the river road at a rapid clip. In less than an hour they were well into the city, at the corner of Broadway and One Hundred and Eighty-First Street. At Watson's bidding the chauffeur guided the car a little way eastward on One Hundred and Eighty-First Street and stopped at the curb.

"You were asking how I got by the guy at the gate," Watson reminded the driver. "Do you really want to know?"

"Sure!"

"It was like this."

He struck the chauffeur sharply on the head with the butt of Leveridge's revolver. The man slumped forward and lay sprawled on the steering wheel.

Watson stepped out of the car and walked away. Any one passing would have seen a tired driver asleep in his car.

There was no need for any further hurry. The chauffeur would be unconscious for several minutes, at least. Watson strolled to St. Nicholas Avenue, and went down to the subway. He boarded a down-town train, but got out at the next station, came to the surface, and got Sigsbee on the telephone. Then he rode down town in a taxicab, and within an hour he was comfortably seated in a hotel room, telling his ally the news.

### XVIII

"THE man exists and is successful because the existence of such a man is impossible," Sigsbee explained thoughtfully. "We have seen a hundred arrows of evidence pointing directly at him; but they meant nothing to us, because we were absolutely convinced that evidence indicating his guilt must be at fault."

"You are sure who the man is, then?" Watson asked.

"Sure? Of course! He is James J. Harford. It is just as absurd to suspect him of the things of which he is undoubtedly guilty as it would be to accuse Rockefeller or Edison of being in the business of stealing and selling second-hand Ford cars; but there is no doubt that it was Harford's place in Westchester County to which you were taken, and Harford himself who talked to you. You know who Harford is, of course?"

Watson shook his head.

"You must remember I have been out of the country nearly all the time for the last ten years."

"You must have been, not to know James J. Harford. He was president of the Great Eastern National Bank for a number of years, and a prominent figure in financial circles; but it was not as a banker that he was best known to the initiated. He was both a sportsman and a sport—owned a large string of fine horses, which he raced under another man's name, and a racing yacht in addition to his steam yacht. He was the secret associate of many famous criminals, and as for women—well,

the true story of the man's love affairs is an astounding one. I happen to know it. The most astounding thing of all is this—not a single purple chapter of that story ever got into the newspapers. When he retired from business, a few years ago, his public reputation was that of a thoroughly upright man. I know that some, at least, of his intimate friends had no idea of the life the man led. Some few of us knew, of course, that he was not the tower of virtue the public thought him to be; but to suspect him of promoting thefts, murders, violent anarchy—well, of course the man is insane!"

"What's the next move?" Watson asked.

"I'm not sure. I'll pass on your news to some people who have been working on this case for the government. The positive knowledge that Harford is the man will change the nature of the work considerably, and will speed the affair to a climax. We must have conclusive proof of guilt before we make an arrest, of course; but it wouldn't surprise me if an arrest was made within a few days—perhaps even within a few hours."

"How about the things he told me?" Watson asked.

"We need more than your unsubstantiated remembrance of a conversation to do much with James J. Harford in a court of law; but now that we know he is the man we're looking for, it won't take long to get what we need."

"What's my next move?"

Sigsbee hesitated.

"I have a Department of Justice man at our Westchester place, taking care of Bergstrom and Monty Epstein," he said. "I'm afraid there isn't anything for you to do just now, Watson. The affair is beginning to take on more of an official character, you see, and—oh, hang it, Watson! I'm going to be frank with you. It's the girl."

"Miss Jarrel?"

"Yes."

"I don't see—"

"There's nothing definite against her, but we know that she is seen a great deal with Leveridge."

"Nevertheless, I'm sure she—"

"You're sure she's all right. I'm sure you are sure of that, Watson, and that's why I think it better to eliminate you from the further proceedings. Your certainty of the young lady's innocence might be the cause of your doing or saying something

unwise. I hope you see my point, old man?"

"I understand your position," Watson admitted grudgingly; "but I don't believe that's it's justified. However, have it your own way. I feel that I've done a little something to help along."

"A little something! You've done everything! Let some of the rest of us do a little work now. Forget it, and pack a good sleep into your system. I'll let you know if anything happens."

Watson undressed and got into bed. He was desperately tired, but sleep would not come to his aid. His thought was all of Teddy Jarrel.

After half an hour of uneasy tossing, he went to the phone and called her number. The switchboard operator at her house said that Miss Jarrel was out.

When Watson finally got to sleep, he made up for lost time. It was one o'clock on the following afternoon when he opened his eyes, and three o'clock before he had dressed and breakfasted.

He promised himself that he would not phone Teddy Jarrel, and broke his promise. The operator informed him that Miss Jarrel was not at home.

Half an hour later Watson called in person at the apartment house where Teddy lived.

"Miss Jarrel she not home," the West Indian negro at the switchboard said. "She gone away, and her maid she gone, too. I don't know when they coming back. Your name Watson?"

"Yes."

"Miss Jarrel she left a note for you."

Watson ripped open the small envelope with trembling fingers. There were only a few lines on the one sheet of note paper. They were:

Please come to me at 199 West Eleventh Street. Do not fail. I am in trouble. I need you.

Watson's heart was beating frantically. He felt weak and suffocated. When he spoke, he found articulation difficult.

"When did Miss Jarrel leave this note here?"

"I think she leave it here last night, boss. I don't know for sure."

"You must know when she left it," Watson insisted angrily.

A sullen expression spread over the negro's face. He shook his head and stubbornly refused to make further answer.

Watson gave the fellow up and hurried out. He felt as weak and shaken as a convalescent from a long illness on his first adventure from the sick room.

Self-condemnatory thoughts were rioting in his brain. If he had only called sooner! He had been keenly conscious of the impulse to do so, of the feeling that Teddy needed him and was calling to him; and he had disregarded the impulse. He had classified it as a fool's weakness and hardened himself against its influence. He had the sense of having been a traitor to the best of himself.

He hailed a taxi, climbed in, and gave the driver the number on Eleventh Street.

Within ten minutes after the taxi Watson engaged had disappeared, another machine drew up in front of Teddy Jarrel's apartment house, and from it Teddy herself stepped out. She stopped at the switchboard and spoke to the West Indian negro who had given the note to Watson.

"Been any calls for me?"

"No, Miss Jarrel."

"No phones?"

"No, ma'am. I been right here ever since you went out. Been no phones and nobody came askin' for you. No, ma'am—no one at all."

Teddy frowned, hesitated, and passed on into the elevator. The switchboard boy grinned and chuckled. Furtively he took from his pocket a fifty-dollar bill and smoothed it between his hands.

"'At come easy," he said to himself. "Few more like 'at, an' 'is be good job!"

The place on Eleventh Street to which the note bade Watson come was a three-story brick house. It had a tiny front yard, floored with cement, and separated from the sidewalk by a three-foot fence of iron pickets. It was one of a row of similar structures which stretched along the northern side of the block.

Watson paid and dismissed the driver, bounded up the stone steps, and rang the bell. The door was opened almost immediately by a young woman of untidy appearance, wearing a soiled gingham house dress. Watson asked for Miss Jarrel.

"Your name Watson?" the woman inquired.

"Yes."

The woman opened the door wider and stepped back into the hall.

"She's been expecting you," she said. "Come in."



Watson stepped through the doorway. A flash of blinding flame flared in his brain for just the tiniest part of an instant and vanished, leaving everything black and blank.

There followed a period of oblivion, eventually disturbed by uncomfortable dreams—dreams of being hurried along a steep mountainside, in dark and storm, by blood-hunting men and animals of monstrous shapes; of running, slipping, and sliding over the rough surface of the slope, and coming ultimately to the edge of an abyss, in the depths of which molten lava was bubbling; an instant of indecision, and then a death leap into the huge furnace. Then came a splitting pain in the head and another period of oblivion, followed by another succession of wild adventure, ending again with the fearful pain in the head and once more oblivion. Such was Bob Watson's condition after he was struck on the head with a blackjack by the man hiding behind the door.

When he recovered consciousness, he found himself on a wide couch, lying on his left side, his hands bound behind his back and his ankles firmly lashed together. Arthur Leveridge was sitting beside him in an easy-chair, smoking a cigarette.

"How do you feel?" Leveridge asked.

"Not so good," Watson confessed, with an attempt at flippancy.

There was a severe, pulsing pain in his head, and his voice was weak in spite of his effort.

"The way you go butting into other people's business, it's a wonder you can feel at all," Leveridge said in an aggrieved voice. "What's wrong with you, anyhow? You're not a cop, are you?"

"No—that's one thing, at least, that's not wrong with me."

"You're not some kind of a government Dick?"

"No."

"I thought not. The big fellow up in Westchester is sold on the idea that you're some kind of a special government cop—something like this cake-eater Sigsbee, who thinks he's so damned wise. I told him he was wrong. I told him you were just a nosy damned fool, poking your snoot into other people's business all the time."

"It's easy to call me names when you've got me tied up like this," Watson taunted him.

"Oh, you're a good man in a muss!"

Leveridge conceded, without rancor. "I'm not taking any chances with you. Say, how the hell did you get wise to this Bergstrom business? And how did you get rid of Bergstrom? Is he pinched, or what?"

"Get your information elsewhere. I'm no newspaper."

"I suppose Monty Epstein squealed," Leveridge went on, without any apparent resentment at Watson's refusal to answer questions. "Monty's been gone for several days now. Is he locked up, or did he squeal for a piece of jack, and blow?"

Watson did not answer. Leveridge made a gesture expressive of indifference.

"No matter," he said. "If he's taken it on the run, we'll get him some time. If he's locked up, we'll get him just the same. The little skunk! Squealed, and he's through. We'll get him!"

Leveridge leaned back in his chair and gave his entire attention to his cigarette for a little time.

"But what are you mixed up in all this for?" he asked presently. "Just because you're sore at me?"

"That would be reason enough if I didn't have plenty of others."

"I suppose, of course, you're an old friend of this guy Sigsbee?"

"Go right on supposing," Watson said. "Don't let me interrupt."

"I was getting worried even before you showed up and made trouble," Leveridge confessed. "The big boss is a wonder, but he goes too strong. I never did like this business of getting mixed up with these nuts who throw bombs. I'm in the game for the jack I can get out of it. Why get all balled up with a lot of bums who take a chance on croaking a guy just because he's a president, or a king, or something? They don't get a nickel out of the job, even if it comes off all right and they make a clean get-away. What's the sense in that?"

"You haven't got me tied up here to give you advice, have you?" Watson asked.

"No—I've got you tied up here because I've got to give you some advice. I'd a damned sight rather give you an ounce of lead where it would do the most good, but if I do that I'm going to get in wrong with my girl. She's made me promise to lay off you."

Watson felt the effects of a sudden savage sickness attacking the vitals of his faith.

"You mean Miss Jarrel?" he asked.

"Naturally. Who else would I mean?"

"You can't make me believe that about her!"

"Can't make you believe what?"

"Any of it—any of the dirty lies you'd like to have me believe!"

"Can't make you believe that she's my girl—is that what you mean?" Leveridge made a clucking noise with the tip of his tongue against his teeth, and wagged his head, in indication of astonishment. "I'll say you're hard to convince! I suppose you thought, because she got a little stuck on you, that she was going to leave me—going to be your girl instead of mine. You're just one of many. I know better than to keep too tight a rein on a filly like Teddy Jarrel. I let her have her head for a little run once in a while, but she's mine. She never forgets that. She's not a one-man girl, but she is a one-master girl, and I'm that one master!"

"You're a damned liar!"

Leveridge frowned.

"I wish I didn't have to bother with you," he said grimly; "but Teddy got one of her sudden crushes on you, and I promised her I wouldn't bump you off. I don't break my promises to her, but you certainly make me feel like doing it. If she isn't my girl and playing my game, why do you suppose she framed you with that note, and got you down here where we could tap you and put you away?"

Again Watson felt the fearful effect of the sickness that assailed his belief; again he sustained his trust with a mighty effort of will.

"You can't make me believe that she knew anything about that note," he declared scornfully.

"I'm getting tired of this!" Leveridge cried irritably. "I'll bring Teddy here, and have her tell you where you get off. She told me that she had a crush on you, and that as long as she had to give you the gate she didn't want to see you again; but she played with you, and you took her seriously. Now she can come down here herself and tell you that she was playing, and that it's time for you to cut out your foolishness. Maybe you'll believe it all when you hear it from her!"

Leveridge left the room and slammed the door. For two hours Watson lay alone, wrestling with the doubts that gripped him. Then the door was opened again, and Teddy Jarrel stepped into the room.

She approached the couch on which Watson lay bound, and stood looking down at him, her hands on her hips, her face set, her eyes hard.

"You've made a thorough hash of things," she said harshly. Her tone struck into Watson's sickened heart like a poison. "You don't deserve to have me intercede for you. I thought you were old enough to know your way around."

Watson's tottering world crashed about his ears, and he lay stricken and sore among the débris.

"It was only a joke to you?" he asked miserably. "Just a flirtation?"

"You were interesting," she admitted. "Perhaps it was more than just the usual flirtation—or might have been, if you had not been so foolish. After you had that first run-in with Leveridge, you should have skipped out, or at least kept out of sight for a little while. Arthur gives me a good deal of leeway, and if you had been reasonably discreet we might have been able to see a good deal of each other."

Watson groaned involuntarily, and then grinned as bravely as the agony in his heart permitted.

"I've been on the wrong train," he said with a desperate try for an easy manner. "As your—shall we call him your friend?—Leveridge told me, I've been hard to convince, but even I don't ask for further evidence. I wonder if you are capable of realizing what I really thought about you, and of you!"

Teddy shrugged.

"Perhaps. What's the difference? Everything's over now." The cheap quality in her voice and manner made Watson writhe. "As far as that goes, I really had an awful crush on you," she went on. "I don't think I ever took to a fellow as quick and hard as I took to you; but of course it's all spoiled now."

"Yes," Watson agreed wearily. "It is spoiled—quite!"

"I don't want you to have any more trouble on my account," she went on. "I never dreamed you were going to take it so seriously, or I wouldn't have gone as far with you as I did. You remember that after you and Arthur had that fight in the cabaret I asked you to go away?"

"Yes," Watson admitted. "I remember that."

"I didn't want you to get into any real trouble on my account. I've had it out

with Arthur, and he's agreed to let you go. He says you know a good deal, but you've told it all to some special government detective of some sort, and you can't do much more harm. Don't bother Arthur any more, will you?"

"I have no heart left to do anything further," Watson said bitterly. "I doubt if it's necessary. It's only a question of a little time when Leveridge and the man back of him will both be nabbed. For myself, I don't particularly care whether they do away with me now or turn me loose. I'm indifferent."

"Now don't talk that way, deary," Teddy counseled. "You'll get over it soon enough. There are plenty of other girls you'll like just as well as you did me. There'll be a man in to untie you in a few minutes. Just walk out of the house and don't come back. Be a good boy, and don't bother any of us any more. Good-by, deary!"

She bent over him, kissed him lightly on the forehead, and left the room.

"My God!" Watson groaned in agony. "Oh, my God!"

After a few minutes a man came into the room, loosed Watson's hands and feet, and went out. Watson rose stiffly and followed him. Down one flight of stairs, along a narrow hall, and out the front door to freedom he went without opposition, but the taste of his liberty was bitter and the bonds of humiliation and agony that pressed on his heart were more galling than those from which his body had been freed.

### XIX

A NIGHT of sleepless agony! Throughout its length Watson lay in bed in the hotel in which he and Sigsbee had engaged adjoining rooms to serve as a meeting place. He was conscious for the first time in his life of the literal legitimacy of the word "heartache" when used in description of the feelings of one enduring sorrow. There was a real ache in his heart—a savage, cutting, physical pain, which would not be eased by any mental argument that he could make.

Sigsbee was absent, Watson did not know or care where. He was sunk so deep in misery that no interest could penetrate to his inner consciousness to rouse him from the lethargic condition that despair had induced.

The day brought neither sleep nor relief

from pain. At nine o'clock Watson rose and aimlessly dressed himself. He had just finished knotting his tie when the wall-phone rang.

"A gentleman to see Mr. Underwood," the operator said.

"Underwood?" Watson repeated, not understanding. "Underwood? Oh, yes!" He had remembered that "Underwood" was the name by which he had registered. "Oh, yes—this is Underwood speaking. Who wants to see me?"

"He says you don't know him, sir, but he says to tell you that it's about Miss Jarrel he wants to see you. He says to tell you that it's a matter of life and death."

Watson's heart beat crazily at the urge of a wild hope.

"Send him up," he said huskily, and hung up the receiver.

The man who came to the room was elderly, withered, and intense in a precise, school-teachery sort of way. He wore black clothing of a conservative cut, heavy gold nose glasses attached to a black cord, and a derby hat of a model ten years out of fashion. His eyes were black and set deep beneath thick eyebrows. A thick, ragged mustache hid his mouth. His hair was thin, somewhat overlong, and of the whiteness of cotton. He had the stoop of the desk man—the student or the office worker. In his manner there was just a hint of the well trained servant.

"Is this Mr. Watson?" he asked, when Bob opened the door.

"I thought you were looking for Underwood," Watson replied.

"I saw Mr. Sigsbee," the caller explained. "He told me that I might find Mr. Watson here registered as Underwood. You are Mr. Watson?"

"Yes."

"My name is Lukin," the old gentleman said. "I don't know just where to begin, there is so much to tell, and such great need of haste. Perhaps I should first explain that I know all about your relations with Miss Jarrel, from the night when you met her and quarreled with Leveridge, up to last evening, when she succeeded in persuading the scoundrel to release you."

"You seem to know a good deal," Watson said. "May I ask how you came by your information?"

"I am—or I must now say I was—private secretary to Miss Jarrel's uncle."

Watson shook his head.

"That means absolutely nothing to me. I didn't know she had an uncle; and if she has, why should his private secretary know all about my relations with her?"

"Miss Jarrel's uncle died at one o'clock this morning," Lukin said solemnly.

"I suppose that's too bad, and I'm sorry," Watson replied impatiently. "But what's all that got to do with me? Why are you here?"

"Miss Jarrel's uncle was D. Gilbert Kennerley," Lukin replied. "Kennerley is the young lady's real name. I was private secretary to Mr. Kennerley for twenty-eight years. I am here because it was his dying request that I should find you and enlist your aid to save his niece from a fate that she does not deserve. I will be as brief as possible, but in order that you may understand, I must tell you some family history. The father of the girl you have known as Miss Jarrel was Thomas H. Kennerley, of this city. He married a girl who had been passionately sought by James J. Harford."

"Ah!"

"You know something of Mr. Harford and his character?"

"A good deal."

"That knowledge will aid you in understanding my story. After the young lady's marriage to Mr. Thomas Kennerley, Harford began laying plans to accomplish revenge. He succeeded to the full extent of his evil hope. Less than a year after Miss Jarrel—Miss Kennerley, properly—was born, her father became involved in a frightful scandal. The whole affair was staged by Harford and his associates, with such diabolical cunning that poor Mr. Kennerley was hopelessly compromised, although absolutely innocent of the shameful things of which he was made to appear guilty. Evidence of his guilt was so well established by the elaborate fraud that only these alternatives were left to Mr. Kennerley—a sensational trial, followed by certain conviction and a term in prison; or death. We who know the facts withhold judgment on the unfortunate man for choosing death and bringing it about by his own hand. The shock was too great for Mrs. Kennerley. She sickened and died within a few months. The baby daughter, Theodosia, was taken in charge by her mother's parents. When she was three years old, she was kidnapped."

An expression of amazed recollection showed on Watson's face.

"The Kennerley kidnaping case!" he exclaimed. "It was the talk of the country. I was only a youngster then, but I remember it well. And Miss Jarrel is—"

"Theodosia Kennerley—yes. The kidnaping was arranged by her uncle, D. Gilbert Kennerley, who, after his brother's death, retired to a seclusion that was practically monastic. He was soon forgotten by the world, but those who believed that he had forgotten the world mistook him. The blood sense was strong in the Kennerleys, and after his brother's disgrace Mr. Gilbert lived for only one thing—revenge! It was his idea that his brother's destroyer should ultimately be destroyed by his brother's child."

Watson felt a ripple of horror pass through him.

"You mean that he kidnaped Miss Jarrel—Miss Kennerley—for the deliberate purpose of using her to—as—"

The secretary bowed assent.

"She was three years old when Mr. Kennerley took her. From that moment her education was arranged for the sole purpose of fitting her to accomplish his revenge. I need not go into the details now. About three years ago Mr. Kennerley decided that it was time for her to begin operations. At his direction his niece appeared in New York, and began to go about with a Broadway set in which she was sure to meet Arthur Leveridge."

"Why Leveridge? I thought Harford was the man who—"

"Mr. Kennerley has a small but not unskillful staff of—well, spies. I was the chief of that little private espionage organization. We knew of the connection between Leveridge and Harford, and believed that it was best to work through Leveridge. There were not many of us, but we were active, Mr. Watson. One hour after your fight with Leveridge, on the night when you first met Miss Teddy, Mr. Kennerley, sitting in the library of his Long Island home, where he has lived as a recluse for years, knew all about the affair. He knew all about your personal history for some years back. He knew the name and character of the man who introduced you to his niece, and knew that you were keenly interested in her. Before dawn he had decided that you might prove to be an able ally, and had sent one of our men to town with instructions to give you twenty one-thousand-dollar bills, so that lack of money



should not prevent you from carrying on the fight against Leveridge that we hoped you were willing and able to make."

"Backing a man to win is one thing; forcing a young girl to muddy herself with people like Leveridge is something else! I'm sorry this man Kennerley died before I learned of this. I would enjoy telling the old devil what I think of him!"

"Mr. Watson!"

Watson uttered an expression of disgust.

"I suppose you want me to respect the man because he's dead. Not me! I wish I believed in hell fire, for then I could hope that he is doomed to eternal torture. Poor little girl! Did her damned old scoundrel of an uncle know that she had become Leveridge's mistress? Or was that part of his dastardly plan? Did he intend that she should—"

"Stop!" The mild little man was suddenly authoritatively peremptory. "Your attitude, Mr. Watson, is evidence of Miss Teddy's histrionic talent, and also, I am sorry to say, of a measure of faith in her which by no means equals the measure of her devotion to you. Late last night Miss Teddy came to her uncle's retreat on Long Island, and astounded all of us by announcing that she intended to marry Leveridge. You probably cannot appreciate the extent of our astonishment, because you do not know, as we do, how she loathed the man, and how utterly powerless he had always been to exert the slightest influence on her by threat or favor. You probably know, to a certain extent, how unscrupulous Leveridge is, and how influential, in his way; and yet for nearly three years he has sought her with every power at his command, and has sought without success. All the while she has been gaining his confidence, getting more and more information from him, successfully taking without giving. All the while we have been setting the trap for Harford, using Leveridge as the bait. Miss Kennerley—the girl you knew as Miss Teddy Jarrel—was remarkably effective in accomplishing our purpose until she met you, Mr. Watson. As an agent of Kennerley in his feud against Harford, I cannot but regret that you wrecked a machine which was inexorably fashioning the revenge of which we dreamed. As a man, I cannot but be glad that in wrecking that machine you gave the life of womanhood to a lovely girl who had never been other than a machine for the fashioning of revenge."

"Do you mean that Miss Jarrel was playing a part when she came to see me in the house where I was trapped, and that she did not write the note asking me to come there?"

"Exactly! Miss Jarrel did not write that note. We do not know who gave it to you, but—"

"The hallboy at her apartment."

"No matter! It was a trick played by Leveridge to get you. When he got you, he sold you to Miss Jarrel for her promise to go away with him. It was his one chance to win her. She cared more for your safety than she cared for the revenge to which her life had been dedicated, than she cared for her own life and for any chance for happiness that lay in it."

Watson groaned. He was tortured by a mixed emotion that was partly relief, but mostly shame.

"I have been a blundering, faithless fool!" he admitted miserably.

He felt himself weak, beaten, hopeless.

The little old man whipped him from his mood with a sharp sentence.

"This is a time for atonement by action," he said sharply. "Expressions of apologetic sentiments do not become you now. There is important work for you to do. The girl who has sacrificed herself for you must be saved from the consequences of her act."

The call to action was effective. It stirred Watson from a lethargy of futile self-abasement to a sense of furious power, of illimitable will and strength.

"What's to be done?" he demanded.

"Quick! Do you know where she is?"

Lukin shook his head.

"I know only where she must not be permitted to go," he said. "The local police and the Federal authorities are closing in on Harford. He has a steam yacht in commission, in which he will try to make his escape. It is cruising off Long Island. It may be that he has already reached it. Leveridge may try to join him, with Miss Kennerley. We must stop him."

"How? If you don't know where they are—"

"If they are not already aboard, their only way to reach the yacht is by seaplane. You are a flyer. Perhaps—"

"I get you! Wait a minute!"

Watson was searching feverishly through the telephone book. He found the number he sought, and muttered it over as he jig-

gled the phone hook. Then he got the connection.

"Is Jackson there—Ed Jackson? All right! Ed? Bob Watson. Yes. Never mind that. Is your bus ready to go? All in shape? Hold it for me. I'll be there in ten minutes. It's a life and death proposition, Ed. Be ready to shoot in ten minutes, whatever happens. I'll be there in that time!"

He hung up the receiver, grabbed up his hat and coat, and opened the door.

"Come on!" he cried to Lukin. "We'll talk in the taxi on the way over. Old pal of mine has a seaplane in commission on the Hudson, at the foot of Ninety-Sixth Street. Let's go!"

Watson pressed a fifty-dollar bill into the driver's hand, with instructions to forget about speed laws and traffic cops.

"You say the authorities are on the point of taking Harford?" he asked Lukin, as the machine sped away.

"They will never take him alive," Lukin said. "He has the means of self-destruction always at hand. If he reaches his yacht, they will never even have the futile satisfaction of taking him dead."

"He can't escape," Watson argued. "The seas aren't wide enough for him to hide on in these days of swift ships and seaplanes and wireless!"

"If he reaches his yacht, and is cornered, he will simply cease to exist," Lukin said solemnly. "In a twinkling he will become as dust in the wind, as sediment in the sea. He has enough explosives cunningly placed in that yacht to enable him to erase himself from the universe, together with the vessel and all on board, by a slight pressure of his finger on a button in his cabin. Do you understand now why I said there was one place to which Arthur Leveridge must not be permitted to take Miss Kennerley?"

A pallor spread over Watson's face. He leaned back and closed his eyes, fighting down the panic of impatience that threatened his needed clarity of mind.

He was out of the machine before it stopped, and sprinting down the long dock. On the float at the end he found his flying friend, Ed Jackson, wrangling loudly with no other than J. Nelson Sigsbee.

Sigsbee greeted Watson with the query: "Are you the man Jackson's holding his seaplane for?"

Watson, breathless, nodded assent.

"If he'd only told me!" Sigsbee exclaimed irritably. "Plenty of room for both of us. Come on!"

They piled into a waiting launch, to be run out to the moored seaplane.

"Do you know all that's happened?" Sigsbee asked.

Watson hurriedly explained what Lukin had told him. Sigsbee sighed.

"Harford got to his yacht," he said gloomily. "We'll never take him alive. It will all be over in another half hour!"

"Have you heard anything of Leveridge and Miss Jarrel?" Watson asked.

Sigsbee hesitated.

"I'm hoping for the best, Bob. I got word of them by phone not five minutes ago. They're making for a seaplane that's waiting for them off the Long Island coast, above Long Beach, trying to get to Harford's yacht. Our men are trying to head them off, but—"

"We've got to stop them!" Watson exclaimed.

"Our men are doing all they can," Sigsbee reminded him.

"Men be damned!" Watson snarled. "If they get into the air, we've got to stop them."

"How can we stop them once they get into the air?"

Watson stared at him for a moment, and laughed.

"You're an earth worm," he said. "You can't do anything without first thinking of your feet, and a place to put them. Wait a minute!"

He stepped forward in the launch, and, leaning above his friend Jackson, spoke to him rapidly in low tones.

Jackson nodded.

"I'm game," he said curtly.

## XX

NEW YORK was a toy town far below, in a fairyland of shining mist. The Long Island beaches were tiny colored gems at the throat of the sea. The land, with its cities and towns and roads, the Sound, and the rivers, combined to make what appeared to Watson and Sigsbee, high in the clear sky, to be a lovely vision. It had not the aspect of reality. It was like a mirage afar on a distant horizon.

Sigsbee touched Watson on the shoulder, and pointed ahead and down to what appeared to be a toy ship. It was Harford's yacht, outbound, some thirty miles from

the coast. Watson knew that it was in motion only by the tiny, wavy ribbon on the sea's surface that was the vessel's wake.

Sigsbee nudged Watson again, and pointed to the right. A long, lean navy vessel—a destroyer—was the object of his attention. She was some fifteen miles from the Harford yacht, but was cutting rapidly toward her.

Watson nodded, to show that he understood. He thought of a greyhound speeding over a prairie flat in pursuit of a doomed hare.

Then he turned his eyes to the left, eagerly searching the sky. An untrained observer would have seen nothing, but Watson had had his training in a school where inability to discover a speck in the dim blue distance was punished by death. He saw, and, leaning forward, he touched Jackson on the shoulder and pointed.

The pilot stared, nodded, and turned his boat to the left. It was nearly two minutes before Sigsbee understood the significance of the maneuver.

Then, far to the left and below, he saw something that was like a flake of pale silver against the vague background of the sky. Rapidly it took shape and became a distant seaplane cleaving the air.

Jackson's boat was a good thirty miles an hour faster than the one of which he was in pursuit. Within less than ten minutes he was directly behind the other plane, and a few hundred feet above it. He moved the controls, and Sigsbee gasped with horror as the heavy machine tipped and roared down through the air, apparently to a certain collision with the craft beneath.

In the cockpit of the plane toward which they were driving, two hooded figures could be seen. Watson stood up, and, tossing aside his hood and goggles, leaned over the fuselage and stared intently down. Sigsbee, watching from the other side, could scarcely restrain himself from reaching forward and struggling with Jackson for possession of the controls, although he knew that such an action would probably bring about the collision he feared.

It seemed that the nose of their machine was fairly touching the plane below when one of the hooded figures in the cockpit looked up, leaned forward, and jabbed the pilot. The pilot looked up, and an instant later the ship he was steering dived sharply and slid away seaward from under the threat of the upper plane.

Jackson zoomed sharply upward, rapidly losing speed. Then he dipped the nose of his plane over once more, and, again behind and above the lower plane, swooped down.

Sigsbee understood, and grinned appreciation. Jackson was herding the other plane from out of the air to the sea.

The lower plane had dived to within eighty or a hundred feet of the ocean in its first frantic effort to avoid a collision. As Jackson dived toward it again, it was climbing very slightly, but little more than a hundred feet up.

As they neared the lower plane a second time, Sigsbee understood why Bob had discarded his hood and goggles. He was leaning far out so that Teddy Jarrel, if she were indeed one of the hooded occupants of the pursued machine, might see and recognize him.

Once more the lower plane was being gradually forced down toward the water. The two occupants of the cockpit were standing, looking up. Both were hooded and wore goggles, but it was evident to Sigsbee that one was a woman. There could be little doubt that it was Teddy Jarrel, and that the man beside her was Leveridge.

Leveridge fumbled in his clothing for a moment, produced a revolver, and fired up at Watson. The girl clutched his arm and struggled to wrest the gun from him, but he held her aside and fired again.

Sigsbee felt a thrill of horror pass through him as he realized the meaning of the girl's next move. She lifted herself quickly over the edge of the cockpit, and for just a second lay flat along the fuselage. Then, as Leveridge reached for her, she released her hold and went spinning down to the sea.

She knew that Watson was searching for her, and that when she was gone from the machine he would no longer follow it. It was her only way of freeing him from the menace of Leveridge's gun.

Watson's response to the girl's move was so swift that it seemed as if the two must have been animated by the same impulse. She had scarcely loosed her hold when he dived over the side of the upper machine, taking with him a small life belt which had hung from a hook in the cockpit.

As he dived over the side of the speeding plane and flashed down toward the sea, Watson had ceased to be a thinking being. He was a thing of instinct, rushing to pro-

fect the treasure to which instinct attached him—the woman he loved. In his state of emotional intoxication he would as readily have dived from the top of the Woolworth Building to certain death on the pavement below.

He was conscious of no particular shock when he struck the water, and was unaware of his frantic struggles to reach the surface. His mind had ceased to function, and only the deep, primeval forces of human sentiment drove him to his task.

He was not mentally aware of searching the surface of the sea, or of winning his way across it by mighty, lunging strokes to clasp and hold afloat the unconscious form of Teddy Jarrel.

As he rose to the top of a long, smooth swell, he saw the machine that Jackson was piloting swing about and dip toward the surface of the sea. The plane bearing Leveridge was speeding on toward the moving yacht, still some three miles distant. Off to the west the long, low destroyer was ripping through the water in rapid chase of its prey.

Within less than a minute Jackson had guided the seaplane alongside Watson. Sigsbee lifted the limp form of the girl into the cockpit, and helped Watson in after her. Watson knelt by her, stroking her head, calling her name, oblivious of everything except his frantic anxiety for her life.

Sigsbee clutched his arm excitedly and pointed out to sea. Watson looked, and saw the plane carrying Leveridge circling

low just over the speeding yacht. The destroyer loomed large, half a mile distant from the pursued vessel.

Watson saw the yacht's superstructure rise into the air. The plane overhead shot up into the air, and came apart in a chaos of fragments. Then a great flare of smoke and flame obliterated all. The flicker of an instant later the roar of the explosion swept over Watson, a furious hurricane of sound.

Slowly the smoke spread and lifted from the surface of the sea. Where the yacht had been, there was now a widening circle of furiously churned water littered with fragments.

The girl in Watson's arms stirred and moaned. Her eyes opened slowly, and she smiled up at him.

As he bent to kiss her, he was conscious of a great sense of completeness, of a predestined task accomplished, and of the surety of reward therefor. Somewhere out of the past there had come down to him through the procession of generations the primeval instinct to search the world for his enemy, to fight and conquer and win to safety with the woman he loved. He had fought a good fight and won, and a spell in which he had been held was broken. The wild beasts in the wood were slain. All thought of danger and death were gone from his mind.

"There were bears in the wood, Teddy," he said gently; "but they've gone now. little girl—gone forever!"

THE END

### REASSURANCE

I HAVE told you in a thousand ways  
That I care.  
Must I put it into words?  
Shall I dare  
Try to say in common phrases  
What transcends  
All articulate expression  
Between friends?

We have known each other ages long—  
So it seems;  
You have glorified the days  
And my dreams.  
All I am, all I have,  
Are for you—  
Is not this the most, the least,  
I may do?

Ruth Forbes Eliot



# For Faithful Service

HOW MR. PINNEY ENJOYED HIS RETIREMENT AFTER FORTY YEARS OF TOIL IN AN OFFICE

By Robert J. Horton

THE warm breath of spring was abroad in the city, bringing a scented message of greenening parks, of budding foliage, of seas smiling under a friendly sun. Policemen had shed their winter overcoats and much of their gruffness; awnings were going up, and the perambulator procession on Riverside Drive was augmented tenfold.

On the brownstone steps of Mrs. Delmont's select boarding establishment, half-way uptown, several favored patrons were taking the balmy evening air, along with a goodly measure of conversation and a somewhat restricted view of the sunset in the Jersey skies to the westward.

Mr. John Pinney smiled quietly to himself on the bottom step. His watery blue eyes glinted now and then like the sun shining through a mist. He was a small, grayish man, and held his head cocked a little to one side. He wore small, gold-rimmed spectacles, which he polished occasionally with meticulous care.

The smattering gossip of the stoop fell upon his ear deliciously. For years, in pleasant weather, these evening sessions had been as much a part of his life as his work or his simple, inexpensive pleasures; and this evening seemed more enjoyable than any he ever had known. The sweet spring air was no more beguiling than the happiness in his heart; for next day he was to retire from business!

Mr. Pinney had worked forty years for Morrow & Co., lace wholesalers. He had started as an errand boy when he was sixteen years old—when the firm, by the way, had been known as Reed & Morrow. Later he had entered the bookkeeping department, and had served there since.

He was not the head of his department. He was not the assistant head. Since the

facts must be told, it must be set down that Mr. Pinney was but a simple cog in the commercial machine; but he had been an efficient and faithful cog, and he reflected upon this with a glow of gratification on the eve of his retirement.

Years before, the elder Morrow had ruled that when any man had served forty years in the firm's employ, or for twenty years previous to his arriving at the age of sixty, he was to be retired with either a bonus or a lump sum or a pension. Whether the elder Morrow ever expected any one to remain so long in his employ, or whether it was a shrewd move to stimulate loyalty and ward off changes in the concern's personnel, was not known. The fact remained that John Pinney had served his forty years, and was entitled to his reward, as William Morrow, son of the late head of the firm, had told him a week before.

Next day would be Saturday, and it would mark the consummation of the elder Morrow's promise.

John Pinney smiled complacently, the wrinkles about his eyes gathering into intricate white lines against an otherwise ruddy countenance. He rubbed his carefully manicured nails against his palms. The reward for his years of toil was a small item compared to the satisfaction he felt when he thought of the conscientious, faithful service he had rendered. He had done his work well. Mr. Pinney hadn't spilled a blot on a page in eleven years!

"Lucky dog!" observed Wilkins, the insurance agent, referring to Mr. Pinney's prospective retirement.

The little group on the stoop stirred.

"No more than he deserves," said Miss Freeman, the school-teacher. "I think Mr. Pinney's achievement should be an example for the youth of the country."

Mr. Pinney glowed and protested the compliment mildly.

"Well," grunted Wilkins, "I wish I was able to lay off for the rest of my life!"

Mr. Pinney winced, but Miss Freeman speedily came to his rescue.

"Mr. Pinney has earned his retirement," she said, eying the insurance man severely through horn-rimmed glasses.

"Whatever Pinney gets from that company, after workin' for 'em for forty years, won't be enough," Mrs. Delmont snapped from the top step. "Pinney, will you please chase that cat away down there?"

Mr. Pinney rose with alacrity. Always this request came at some time during the evenings on the stoop. From his vantage point on the lower step he drove away the cats with a great show of viciousness, to please Mrs. Delmont, who hated cats, and with a certain secret caution on his part, lest he should harm one of them. He wouldn't willingly have hurt a fly.

Having successfully frightened the wandering feline, he returned to his place, flicking a bit of dust from his trousers with his handkerchief. He listened amiably to the conversation, accepting agreeably the occasional bits of persiflage directed at him because of his good fortune.

How much did he expect to get? He had no idea. However, he did not consider Morrow & Co. a cheap concern. He felt that they had paid him well for his services. Many men of family did not receive as much as he did. He had had no family to support—no one was dependent upon him. He had been quite satisfied.

Would he take the pension or the lump sum? He believed he would accept the bonus in a lump. It would save bookkeeping, since the company would not have to send him monthly checks. He had no wish to cause any inconvenience.

What did he plan to do? He had made no definite plans for the future. It was to be a new experience, this prospective existence devoid of labor. He would have plenty of time in which to plan. Surely it would not be hard to use up one's leisure—particularly in his case, since he had had so little leisure.

And Mr. Pinney was universally envied.

## II

THAT night, after he turned out his light, the bookkeeper sat on the edge of his bed, staring into the shadows of the street. He

speculated upon the sum he would receive. The amount of the bonus had never been definitely stipulated. Mr. Pinney had saved some money, of course. A man of his habits naturally would. Whatever he might receive—and he had certain vague ideas as to the amount—added to what he had, would in all likelihood keep him comfortably for the balance of his life.

It was a pleasant thought. The alarm clock could ring its head off at the customary hour of half past seven in the morning. *He* would have to worry! Nor would he have to plan ahead for certain excursions about New York, or to suffer the traffic jam which always attends an outing on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday.

The Hudson! He never had been farther up that majestic river than the Fort Lee Ferry. Long Branch! He had heard about the clam chowder they served on those boats to and from the Highlands, or Seabright, or wherever it was they landed the passengers from the boats. Deep sea fishing! Mr. Pinney had long nourished a secret ambition to catch a large fish. The Catskills! Trout streams and pines and the invigorating air of the mountains had often lured his fancy where his pocketbook had intrigued his caution.

Thus Mr. Pinney dreamed, until the regularity of his habits refused further to countenance such an occupation. He fell asleep.

But sleep refused to dispel the unaccustomed luxury of a prospect of workless days and real dreams sufficed to add to the lure of a life—oh, Mr. Pinney didn't feel so old, and fifty-six, after all, isn't so far down on the sunset side for some people—devoted to one's own personal inclinations without thought for the obligations which regular attendance in the business world demands.

But when the alarm clock observed its vigil at seven thirty next morning, Mr. Pinney was awake.

## III

NEXT morning, at half past seven, when the alarm clock sounded its customary reveille, Mr. Pinney arose. At five minutes to nine he was at his desk. He had made it a practice to be just a wee bit ahead of time, that his punctuality might never be questioned.

He tried to put the same perfunctory cheerfulness into his greetings this morning,

but was only partially successful. Smoldering within him was an unaccustomed feeling of elation and expectancy even more pronounced than was usual at New Year's, when the senior employees of Morrow & Co. ordinarily received a bonus—a custom which had been discontinued during the war, and had not been revived.

He received the compliments and jests of his fellow workers with equanimity and inward pride. Yet his work had never seemed so important to Mr. Pinney as on this morning when he was about to relinquish it.

He wondered who would take his place. Then came an appalling thought—perhaps he would not be missed!

The head of the department did not appear worried, nor did the cashier; and when William Morrow, head of the firm, came in, he didn't appear to notice Mr. Pinney at all. Perhaps the veteran bookkeeper was one of the cogs that could slip out of the machine and not disturb its running. But no! He went over his ledgers—works of art they were, clear and clean records. He only hoped for the firm's sake that his successor would do as well.

When twelve o'clock passed without a call to the private office, Mr. Pinney fell a prey to disturbing thoughts. They closed at one o'clock on Saturdays, and all business was supposed to be finished by that hour. Mr. Pinney had imagined that it would take quite some time to close the business between himself and Mr. Morrow. He had even anticipated a little ceremony. It was an important matter, was it not, this leaving a concern after having been with it for forty years?

At half after twelve Mr. Pinney was visibly nervous. Others in the office were eying him surreptitiously, for Mr. Morrow had announced, several days before, that Mr. Pinney was to retire. The bookkeeper now wished that this announcement had not been made. Then he reflected that if a ceremony were intended, it doubtless would be scheduled for after hours. He could not expect honor for himself at the firm's expense and on the firm's time into the bargain.

At twenty minutes to one a boy informed him that Mr. Morrow wished to see him in his private office.

Mr. Pinney laid down his pen with a shaking hand. A blot fell upon an otherwise spotless page. Mr. Pinney stared at

it in fascination. A blot! From his pen! The first, as well as he could remember, in some eleven years! Could this be an evil omen staring up at him from that sea of virtuous white which he had preserved for so many years?

He fumbled in his drawer for the keen-edged erasing knife—a thing which he had not used for so long that he doubted if he had it at all.

But Mr. Morrow was waiting. Hurriedly dusting his office coat with his hands, Mr. Pinney hastened to the private office, leaving behind him a wake of envious stares.

He entered the office, to find Mr. Morrow alone, and sat down meekly in the chair indicated, across the broad expanse of desk from his superior.

Mr. Morrow looked about vaguely for a few moments before permitting his gaze to center upon Mr. Pinney. The latter thought his employer appeared worried; and he was right. If Mr. Pinney had but known it, he had caused William Morrow a great deal of worry. If he had pondered over the amount of the bonus Mr. Morrow would allow him, he hadn't pondered half as much as Mr. Morrow had puzzled over the same matter. The latter wished that his father had been explicit as to amounts.

How much did Mr. Pinney expect? Mr. Morrow studied him from beneath black, bushy brows, and frowned. Mr. Pinney lowered his gaze. Morrow speculated shrewdly. He wasn't particularly tight, but at the same time cash money then was a rather scarce article.

He cleared his throat.

"Mr. Pinney, you are aware that it was my father's idea that when a man had spent forty years with a concern, he had served his usefulness, or performed his duty, whichever way you wish to look at it, and was entitled to retirement."

Mr. Pinney nodded and smiled faintly.

"And he made certain provisions to assure such retirement to any employee of this concern who performed that service," Mr. Morrow continued ponderously. "He provided for a monthly pension or a bonus to any such retiring employee. You are eligible. Which method of recompensation do you prefer?"

"I believe I'll take it in a lump, sir," gulped Mr. Pinney, wiping his glasses. "It 'll save bookkeeping," he added in extenuation.

"Very well," said Morrow, pressing the tips of his fingers together.

What amount would Pinney consider right? He had calculated that one hundred dollars for each year of Mr. Pinney's service would be ample—yes, more than ample—generous. It was, after all, a lot of money. Pinney might not live so very long, even though he did look nearer forty-six than fifty-six. Moreover, he should have saved something himself.

Mr. Morrow cleared his throat again.

"Ah! I assume, Mr. Pinney, that you have been able to lay aside a little something for yourself?"

Mr. Pinney fidgeted.

"A little—yes, sir," he replied, nodding.

Mr. Morrow's brows contracted. As likely as not the poor fish didn't have more than a few hundred dollars in the bank. What did he expect, anyhow?

Well, he would try him out. If Pinney made a fuss, he would raise the amount a little, and that would add to the philanthropic aspect of the affair.

"I thought," he said genially, but watching his retiring employee narrowly, "that a thousand dollars would be about right."

The ghost of a smile played upon Mr. Pinney's lips. It was so ghostly, in fact, that it came near being sardonic.

"However," Mr. Morrow continued quickly, "I decided that it wasn't enough, and that two thousand would be better."

Mr. Pinney's smile now was genuine, and Morrow breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"Of course," he said somewhat blusteringly, "if later you should find that insufficient, why—er—it's just possible—er—that we might be able to make a further moderate adjustment."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Pinney simply.

Morrow opened a drawer of his desk and removed two of four Liberty bonds which were there. He handed the two bonds—each of a denomination of one thousand dollars—to Mr. Pinney, and his face beamed as he took the bookkeeper's hand.

"I hope you enjoy your leisure," he boomed heartily. "You've earned it. By Jove, it's a quarter past one! My man must be waiting. Come, I'll take you up-town in my car."

An added honor! Mr. Pinney thrilled as he hurried out into the main office.

Every one had gone. He felt a momentary pang at the thought that his fellow

workers had not seen fit to wait a quarter of an hour to bid him good-by. But he didn't blame them. It was their one holiday in the week, while he faced months of holidays!

He speedily gathered his few belongings together and took a long, last look at the empty desks. Some one had put his books away. Then he remembered. The blot! He would have to fix that; but Mr. Morrow was calling. He followed his erstwhile employer down to the car.

As they rode up Broadway, with the warm sunshine bathing that glorious thoroughfare and the buildings flanking it with gold, Mr. Pinney's heart leaped. *His New York!* His now, to play with and to explore! Manhattan, in all the wondrous beauty of her spring dress, was inviting him to taste freely of those pleasures which she had withheld for so many weary years!

#### IV

CONTRARY to his expectations, Mr. Pinney didn't sleep "on through" next Monday morning. Although the "silent" lever was clamped hard against the bell of the alarm clock, he was awake and staring at the dial when the hands indicated half past seven.

He grunted, turned over, yawned, and finally got up. The first day of his new-born liberty had come; and it was one of those spring mornings that make New York a jewel in the diadem of cities.

Mr. Pinney deliberately—whistling the meanwhile—put on the bright lavender necktie he had received from Mrs. Delmont the previous Christmas—the one he had regarded with awe and an occasional shudder. He spurned his ordinary working clothes, and reached for his Sunday best. The little bald spot on the back of his head glistened, as if to convey to any in the rear the reflection of Mr. Pinney's smile.

Breakfast was a leisurely affair, much to the disgust of Martha, Mrs. Delmont's capable maid, who told the cook that Mr. Pinney was already beginning to "put on airs."

Incidentally, Mr. Pinney had tactfully neglected to inform any one at his boarding house of the amount of his retiring bonus. There were all sorts of conjectures. Some estimated it well up in the thousands. Others—Mr. Wilkins, the insurance man, included—depreciated it; but all were secretly convinced that the amount was am-



ple, else how could Mr. Pinney appear so indubitably cheerful?

Mrs. Delmont gave explicit instructions that Mr. Pinney was to have the best the house afforded. It is considered more or less of a distinction to have a wealthy retired business man preferring one's boarding house to other eligible places—such as hotels, for instance.

And the Hudson came to know Mr. Pinney. He sailed up that majestic stream once by day and once by night. Coney Island saw him for the first time in sixteen years. He went out in a fine old tub, the Captain Thomas True, and caught a fish three feet long. This piscatorial triumph so irritated Mr. Wilkins, who had been trying for five years to catch something larger than a mackerel, that that gentleman snorted and left his place on the stoop every time Mr. Pinney referred to it.

He revisited Bronx Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, took a flyer into Jersey—"to get a breath of the fields"—and treated Miss Freeman, the schoolteacher, to so many movies that that elderly young lady felt, as she expressed it, "horribly dissipated!"

Two weeks of this—about the period Mr. Pinney had annually had for his vacation—and there came a lull in his roving activities.

He still was getting up every morning at half past seven—much to his disgust—and he was beginning to find it difficult to find something to do, some place to go. After all, Mr. Pinney was a bit old-fashioned, and his mind naturally reverted to the resorts and pleasures which had been his stand-by ever since he came to New York. Cabarets bored him, and he didn't dance. The sessions on Mrs. Delmont's front stoop had long since killed the lure of Broadway's night life. He preferred the big streets in the daytime, when he could gaze at the display windows and tap the pavement with his new walking stick.

The parks, with their population of idlers, constituted his next resort. He patronized them all for some two weeks, and then they became sickening. Frequent questions as to his business were responsible for this.

"I've retired," he would snap in answer to the interrogation.

"So've I," was many times the grinning answer from individuals who looked as if they never had had anything to retire from.

The question came to irritate Mr. Pinney very much. Did all these palpable bums consider that *they* had retired? He left the parks in disgust.

Sometimes, too, he failed to attend the evening session on the stoop. He had nothing to talk about, it seemed. If he couldn't venture a bit of gossip about his day's work, he certainly wouldn't boast of his day's loafing.

At times he seemed downright vicious. Again he was moody. He had irresolute moments, when he would stop wherever he happened to be and stare about at this and that, or at nothing at all, in indecision. He snapped at Martha. He even snapped at Mrs. Delmont!

Mrs. Delmont, at first really concerned, soon became coldly suspicious.

"I wonder if Mr. Pinney has started drinking!" she said to Mr. Wilkins one night, when the retired bookkeeper was absent from the stoop.

"Him drinking?" Wilkins jeered. "With booze costing what it does now? I'd sooner expect to see you taking a snort yourself, Mrs. D."

"Well, he's acting peculiar," said Mrs. Delmont stiffly.

"Sure he is," Wilkins agreed. "He's cracked!"

"He's what?"

"Cracked—a little off in the dome. This retiring business has thrown a wrench into his brain machinery. Can't tell me any sane man would take five straight trips in one day on the Staten Island ferry," concluded Mr. Wilkins, who had never got over the fish incident.

Mrs. Delmont held her tongue. It was one of the two things, she concluded—either drink or a failing mind, or perhaps both.

If the two could have watched Mr. Pinney's actions that night, they would have sworn that both conjectures had hit the mark.

He came home about nine o'clock, and passed up the steps with a curt nod. Half an hour later he again left the house, attired in an old suit and a discarded hat, and minus his stick. He took the subway far down town, where he entered a dingy café.

If any of his old acquaintances could have seen what he did next, they would have been thunderstruck. He spoke to the proprietor, with whom he seemed to be

acquainted. Perhaps he had frequently taken lunch there, for it was near his former place of business. They retired behind a partition, and Mr. Pinney took a drink from a bottle which the proprietor produced. Then he took another. Two drinks! And Mr. Pinney had lived a life of absolute abstinence!

Leaving the café, he walked rapidly toward the East Side—a locality which he always had studiously avoided.

At four o'clock next afternoon Mr. Pinney returned to the boarding house, after having spent most of the day on Riverside Drive. Two minutes later he dashed downstairs, shouting. Mrs. Delmont and Martha came running. Mr. Pinney gesticulated to them wildly, and they followed him upstairs. He led them into his room, and spread his arms in a gesture of despair.

The two women stared in wonder. The room was in chaos, with the contents of bureau drawers, closet, and trunk tumbled out upon the floor.

Mr. Pinney pointed to the trunk, which had been broken open, its tray overturned, and its bottom ransacked.

"My bonds!" he cried. "The bonds Morrow & Co. gave me! They were in there, and they're gone!"

And he sank in a heap on the bed.

## V

For the first time within the compass of Mrs. Delmont's memory the police came into her house. They questioned Mr. Pinney, whose senses seemed numbed by the catastrophe. They also questioned Mrs. Delmont and others in the house, and they did it thoroughly.

Only the landlady, Martha, and a boy helper had been in the house that afternoon, it being the cook's afternoon off. Mrs. Delmont explained that her boarders were workers, and did not stay in the house during the day—excepting Mr. Pinney, who had retired, and who was in occasionally.

Yes, Mr. Pinney had been known to keep sums of money and valuables in his trunk. She had warned him against it. He was simple in some ways. It was just like him to keep the bonds there. No doubt some one had learned of this reckless practice.

She had taken a nap from three to four o'clock, as she did every day. Martha and the boy had been in the kitchen. No, Martha didn't have a key to Mr. Pinney's

room. Besides, a skeleton key had been used, and had been left sticking in the lock. It was a plain case of burglary—a fine thing, indeed, for that highly respectable neighborhood!

On the heels of the police came reporters. It made a neat little human interest story—"Bold Thieves Steal in Minute Man's Reward for Forty Years' Toil," and all that. Mrs. Delmont deplored the publicity.

"I always said he was crazy," declared Mr. Wilkins. "Keeping those bonds in his trunk proves it!"

Mr. Pinney himself had nothing whatever to say. He was, to all appearances, stunned. At times there seemed to be a look of terror in his eyes. Two thousand dollars is quite a sum to lose. He had been checking on his bank account for his personal expenses.

He avoided his fellow boarders, although they were all sympathetic. Even Mr. Wilkins said that it was a shame, although there seemed to be several possible shades of meaning to his tone.

The robbery occurred on Wednesday. On Friday, the police still being without a clew, Mr. Pinney attired himself in his regular business suit. He seemed more cheerful. At half past ten he started down town, and at half past eleven he entered the private office of William Morrow.

"Pinney, you're a plain fool!" was Mr. Morrow's salutation.

Mr. Pinney twisted his hat, speechless.

"As many years as you worked in our business office, with every opportunity to learn something about financing, and then you keep your money—for Liberty bonds are the same as money—in a trunk!"

Very pale, Mr. Pinney started to speak, but found he couldn't. Morrow tossed a pen upon his desk impatiently.

"It all goes to prove what I've always contended," he grumbled. "Pensioning off the average employee is folly. He don't know what to do when he quits work, and he don't know how to take care of what he has!"

He bit his lip in vexation. He took it for granted that Pinney expected two more bonds; and, since he had considered giving the fellow four in the first place, he would probably have to go through with it.

"All confounded foolishness!" he said savagely.

"Perhaps you're right, sir," Mr. Pinney murmured.

"Right? Of course I'm right! Did you have all your savings in that trunk, too, or did you have them stuffed in an old shoe?"

There was contempt in Morrow's voice.

Before Mr. Pinney could venture an answer, there came an imperative knock on the door. In answer to Morrow's summons a policeman entered, dragging a man of surly countenance with a stubble of red beard. They were followed by a man in a gray uniform.

"There he is!" said the policeman gruffly, shoving his charge into a chair, while the man in gray closed the door.

"Who is he?" demanded Morrow, rising.

"The crook that stole that feller Pinney's bonds," said the officer. "This man"—pointing to the man in the gray uniform—"is from the Gotham National, where the guy tried to sell one of the bonds for seven hundred an' fifty. He acted suspicious, so they looked up the number of the bond an' found it had been stolen. Found the other on him. Here's the bonds, but we'll need 'em for evidence."

"How'd you happen to come here?" asked the bewildered Morrow.

"Phoned Pinney's boarding house, an' he wasn't home. Brought the guy over to make sure them was the bonds."

Meanwhile the gazes of Mr. Pinney and the alleged burglar had met and locked. Mr. Pinney, white-faced, backed slowly against the wall before the sinister gleam in the other's eyes.

"He told me to do it!"

The words came in a snarl from the man in the chair.

"He told me to do it! Framed it with me down in Sad Mike's place on the Bowery. Told me when his landlady would be asleep an' the coast clear. Said I could have the bonds. Another cull with him said he was O. K., an' I took 'im on. That's him over there!"

He pointed a steady finger at Mr. Pinney, whose face was the color of white ashes, and whose bulging eyes continued to stare at the derelict. Guilt was spread upon the bookkeeper's countenance like a layer of paint.

"Fine story!" said the bank officer.

Nevertheless the man had identified Mr. Pinney, whom neither of the officers knew.

"Your name Pinney?" demanded the policeman.

Mr. Pinney could only nod. His tongue was frozen to the roof of his mouth.

"Those are your bonds, then?" scowled the officer.

"Sure they're his bonds!" sneered the derelict. "He told me I could have 'em if I'd steal 'em. Told me where his room was, where the bonds was, when was the best time to get in, an' said to make it look as bad as I could. If you don't believe it, look at his map!"

Mr. Pinney cringed before the concentrated stare of all present.

"So *that* was the idea!" said Morrow in a cold, hard voice. "A put-up job between the two of you!"

"What—what do you—mean?" stammered Mr. Pinney.

"I mean I think it was a scheme to get more bonds out of me," said Morrow harshly. "Probably you told this fellow he could have one bond, and he was to give you the other. Maybe he double-crossed you. You knew I'd make good the stolen bonds—don't deny it! Well, we'll make this thief tell *all* the story before we get through with *him*!"

Mr. Pinney had been looking at his former employer. Now, as he shifted his gaze, he saw a crafty look on the face of the derelict.

"Oh, I'll talk soon enough," smirked the man. "An' I won't say we didn't have a little agreement."

He looked triumphantly at Mr. Pinney, whose face slowly turned a dull red.

"No wonder you told the police you didn't have the numbers of the bonds," thundered Morrow. "They had to come to me to get them. Thought you'd cover up your tracks, eh?"

Mr. Pinney appeared stupefied, and the hat fell from his hand.

"I better take the two of them over and lock 'em up," said the policeman, laying a heavy hand on Mr. Pinney's shoulder.

At the touch, Mr. Pinney galvanized into action. He leaped to Morrow's desk and brought his fist smashing down upon it with a crashing impact which made the inkstand jump.

"He lies!" he cried. "There wasn't any agreement, except that I said he could have the bonds. I didn't ask for a bond back, or for anything back. I—"

"You told him to steal 'em?" roared Morrow.

"I told him to steal 'em!" said Mr. Pinney in a loud voice. "Told him to steal 'em, so I'd have an excuse to come down

here and ask for my job back. Told him how to get in and when to get in, and *all*. I didn't have anything to do. I got to sittin' around on park benches. A bum told me he could show me a nest of burglars in a dive on the Bowery. I took a couple of drinks—yes, two of 'em—and went over there. I met this fellow and made arrangements for him to steal the bonds."

Morrow and the two officers stared at him, while he wiped the sweat from his face and forehead.

"And I told him he could have 'em," Mr. Pinney went on. "You think I expected to profit by it—that I wanted more? Here, look!"

Mr. Pinney sneered openly as he laid a bank book and a banker's statement on the desk before Morrow.

"I'm not a pauper," he boasted. "I don't have to steal. I guess I can give away a couple of bonds if I want to. That statement will show you that I've got twelve thousand dollars' worth of sound investments, and there's nineteen hundred cash of mine in that bank!"

Mr. Morrow's eyes were popping.

"I got that fellow to steal those bonds so you'd think I had to go back to work," shrilled Mr. Pinney. "That's what I came down here for this morning—to use the robbery as an excuse to get my position back. I don't want to retire. You said something about a man's having served his usefulness when he'd worked forty years. Do you think I've served *my* usefulness? Do you think *I'm* through? If I can't get my place back here, I can get one somewhere else!"

There was a plaintive note in Mr. Pinney's voice. Then he whirled fiercely on the derelict.

"Tell 'em I've told the truth!" he cried. "I explained to you why I wanted those bonds stolen. Tell 'em—tell 'em, or, damn you, I'll—"

The infuriated Mr. Pinney leaped upon the man, clutching him by the throat. As the policeman pulled him away, the man nodded.

"I ain't to blame," he muttered.

"No, he isn't," panted Mr. Pinney. "I'm responsible."

For some time there was silence. The officers stared curiously at the diminutive figure of the bookkeeper. Morrow was gazing out of the window with a queer look in his eyes. In his hands he held Pinney's

bank book and statement. He turned slowly to the officers.

"Let the man go," he instructed. "Gentlemen, have some cigars. Then I guess you'd better be going, too."

When they had left, he regarded Mr. Pinney thoughtfully.

"All that to get your place back!" he remarked, as if to himself. "And you really want to go back to work?"

Mr. Pinney picked up his hat.

"I—I expect it does seem peculiar," he said hesitatingly. "Maybe it's foolish. Mr. Morrow, I've simply *got* to work, and I don't know of any other place to work than here, if—if—"

Mr. Pinney's voice faltered. Morrow rose, handed the book and statement to Pinney, and gave him the bonds. He looked at him again—a long, searching look. Then he scowled.

"Very well, Mr. Pinney," he said briskly. "You can report at your old place on Monday morning."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Pinney meekly, as he sidled out of the private office, leaving his employer staring at him blankly.

## VI

THE first hot breath of impending summer had had the city in its grasp all day, but with the coming of night a cool breeze wafted in from across the Hudson and washed the side streets. It was Monday. The little group on Mrs. Delmont's front stoop was breaking up.

"Pinney!" called Mrs. Delmont from the doorway. "I believe there's a cat down there!"

Mr. Pinney, in his shirt sleeves, leaped from his place on the bottom step and aimed a vicious, if wide, kick at the offending feline. Then he slowly climbed the deserted steps.

At the top he paused, and drew from a hip pocket a folded sheet of paper. It was a peculiar piece of paper, this, with red and blue lines upon it, and many figures. Mr. Pinney was very familiar with it, for he had carefully copied it that day, and had slipped the substitute into its place in the loose-leaf ledger.

He opened it now, and looked for a moment at a blot, partially obliterated, in its center. Then he tore the spoiled sheet into bits, and fed the pieces to the breeze, before he entered the house, whistling.



# The Amateur Convict

YOUNG ARTHUR TOWNSEND'S EXCITING CAREER IN THE  
MOTION PICTURE BUSINESS

By Willis Brindley

"EDWARD," Mrs. Townsend began plaintively, "if you could give up, for just a moment, reading about that escaped convict, and listen to me!"

Visualize a composite of all the madam presidents and you have Mary Noble Townsend—handsome, with gray hair in a permanent wave, tight-corseted, deep-bosomed, authoritatively costumed, and never out of pose.

"All right, Mary; but this convict stuff is mighty interesting. Can't help feeling a sort of admiration, even for a bad man, when he has plenty of nerve!"

Mr. Townsend dipped deep into a half cantaloupe, and looked up at her. He was not a large man, not impressive like his wife, but shrewd-looking, with a thin, lined face, sharp little eyes, and thinning hair touched with gray. He was a wholesale druggist who found diversion in politics.

"I do wish you would make an effort to appreciate, Edward," Mrs. Townsend continued, "that my work is as important to me as your work is to you. It means just as much to a woman, among women, to be president of the associated women's clubs as it does for a man to be elected mayor."

"Yes," said Mr. Townsend, stealing a sidelong glance at his paper. "All right, Mary. Shoot ahead!"

"Well, the drive we are making for the children's hospital is simply not going, and it's got to go. I think you might give me some advice, and some help. Now that you're mayor, and out almost every night, and with Arthur away at college, so that I've got nobody to drive the car for me, and with people that one used to be able to count upon for help—"

Her voice trailed off.

"You need publicity, for one thing, and somebody to start the drive with a good

big check. Suppose you try old Dr. Marston—he's a pretty good advertiser. Give him to understand that if he'll give, say, a thousand dollars, you'll get the newspapers to print a picture of the check."

"We tried that, and he wouldn't give more than a hundred. That isn't enough, and—oh, dear!"

Mr. Townsend had recovered the paper and was buried in it.

"Got to hand it to that fellow, even if he is a bandit," he said, and finished his coffee at a gulp. "Happened yesterday afternoon at a ball game for the prisoners. He'd got hold of some pliers that would cut wire. While he was watching the game, he slipped one hand behind him and cut the barbed wire fence that surrounds the ball park. When he had two or three strands cut, he slid out under the fence and made a sneak for the brush. The guards saw him, and fired, but apparently they didn't hit him. He's a nifty cuss, that Garner! Escaped twice before, you know. Wouldn't surprise me a bit to see him walk into the mayor's office and ask for the keys of the town. Well, I'll have to be starting."

He laid his paper down, rose, gave his mouth a quick swipe with a crumpled napkin, pulled down his waistcoat, and felt in the upper left-hand pocket of it for a cigar. No cigar there!

He patted himself, in the hope of discovering cigars in the side pockets of his coat. No cigars! There might be one in the outside upper pocket. Yes—and with it a letter.

Mr. Townsend lighted the cigar and looked at the envelope.

"Darned funny thing!" he said. "Oh, yes, I remember now. It came to the office yesterday, when I had a delegation from the North Side there, and I put it in that

pocket so as to be sure not to forget it. It's from Arthur."

He opened it and read:

DEAR DAD:

I got into a little trouble here. Nothing serious, but they don't seem to want me to stay, so I'm starting home to-morrow. That will get me home for breakfast Thursday. Break the news to mother.

Your loving son,  
ARTHUR.

"Damn that boy!"

It was the father who spoke, rather than the wholesale druggist and mayor, and it was the mother, rather than the madam president, who pleaded for her son.

"But, Edward, he's so young! It'll be nice to have him home again, anyway, and he can drive for me."

"Young! Sure he's young! He's only twenty years old, and he's been kicked out of four colleges. When I was twenty years old I owned half a drug store. We've done with pampering Arthur!"

Mrs. Townsend sniffed.

"You're not fair to Arthur. He doesn't like the wholesale drug business, I admit, and he doesn't get on at college, but he's a smart boy. He knows absolutely everything about ducks. Dr. Marston says so himself, and Dr. Marston has the finest duck farm. Why, do you remember that when he was just a little fellow, he—"

"Ducks!"

"Yes, ducks; and he has a fine speaking voice."

"Ducks and a fine speaking voice!" Mr. Townsend bit an inch off the end of his cigar and tossed it in the general direction of the fireplace. "I knew a druggist once who could trim a dog's ears, but the sheriff sold him out just the same!"

They heard the front door open, then slam shut, and Arthur was there, filling the room. He tossed a grip and an overcoat into a corner, enveloped his mother in a hug, grabbed his father's hand and nearly tore it off, and drew up a chair.

"Gosh, but I'm hungry!" he said, reaching for the platter of cantaloupe. "I wish you'd get me a stack of hot cakes and things, mother. I didn't have any money, except a dollar for the porter, so I couldn't get breakfast on the train."

"Just what was it this time?" Mr. Townsend asked.

"Why, hardly anything at all this time. An instructor asked a girl a tough one, and

the girl couldn't answer, and she cried, and he made a sarcastical remark, and I beaned him. Say, have you been reading about this convict guy, Garner?"

From outside there came the persistent, loud honking of an automobile horn.

"Gosh, I forgot all about that guy!" said Arthur. "That's my taxi. You'll have to run out and pay him, dad. I told him to wait—I'd be right out with the fare."

"Taxi!"

"Why, yes, dad. You couldn't expect me to walk, could you? It's eight blocks, and uphill."

"Well, of all the—"

"Edward!"

Honk, honk! Honk, honk, honk!

Mr. Townsend went out and paid the taxi man. When he returned he was calm—ominously calm.

"Stand up!" he ordered, and Arthur stood, clutching his napkin.

"You're the only son of respectable parents, Arthur, who have spent a lot of time, a great deal of affection, and a considerable sum of money, in the hope that they would rear a man to be a credit to the name. You're twenty years old, six feet two inches tall, of splendid physical appearance and fair mentality, and you don't amount to two whoops in hell."

"Yes, sir," said Arthur, and swallowed solemnly.

"Board at this family boarding house will cost you, including a room with private bath, two dollars a day, beginning with to-morrow morning. My advice to you is to get out and hustle for a job."

"Yes, sir," said Arthur, and sat down.

"Edward," begged Mrs. Townsend, "couldn't he work for me, just to-day? I need him on this children's hospital drive. I am so anxious to get a thousand dollars from Dr. Marston!"

"No," said Mr. Townsend, and then, to Arthur: "Is anything detaining you, young man?"

Arthur got up at that, slowly walked over to the corner where he had thrown his grip and coat, and picked up a tiny cap, shaped to fit the skull like an inverted bowl. It was green, with a red topknot. This he carefully planted on his head.

"Nice hat to look for work in," said Mr. Townsend.

"I was going to ask you to let me take one of your hats," said Arthur sullenly;

"but just for that, I'll wear this. I'm going down town now to get me a job, and you can take it from me that I'll get it. There isn't anything so hard or fancy about this work thing. Also, mother, I'll drop in on old Dr. Marston, if I have time, and get that thousand-dollar check for the hospital. I have the honor, sir, to wish you a very good morning!"

## II

ARTHUR TOWNSEND'S ideas with reference to the "work thing" were vague, but it was a beautiful autumn morning, and he strode along, kicking dead leaves and whistling snatches from "Ain't We Got Fun!" At the first corner, his attention was arrested by a huge sign, stretching across the width of the motion picture theater. It read:

## THE AMATEUR CONVICT

Daily from 10 to 10

In the space that flanked the ticket box were the usual lithographs, showing a handsome rascal in clothes striped with alternate black and white streaks.

It lacked half an hour to opening time, yet there was a line of perhaps twenty, all men, extending from the entrance door.

"Funny!" mused Arthur, as he stepped in behind the last man. "Box office not open, and yet there's a line before the door. Maybe the first fifty get in free."

The other door opened, just then, to let out a man in violently striped silk shirt sleeves, who took a few steps and stood with his feet apart, his right hand on his chin, sizing up the cue of men.

"You'll do," he said presently, and walked up and took Arthur by the arm. "Sorry, boys, but this lad here is the only one of you that's large enough to fill the suit. I'll advertise again when I need a man. Better luck next time!"

He led Arthur into the theater, to a tiny office at the right of the entrance, and tossed him a striped suit.

"Get into those," he said. "Right over your clothes, I guess, like an overall suit. You're tall enough, but you'll need your clothes underneath to fill out the suit good. Those guys that get up these things seem to think the world is populated with giants!"

Arthur got into the suit and submitted to inspection. The striped cap he pulled on over his own freshman cap.

"You'll do," said the manager, nodding. "Funny thing about the public—got to feed 'em the old stuff, to get by! I don't suppose that stripes like these have been worn in modern penitentiaries for years and years, yet a convict's not a convict, in the movies, without stripes. Same as a brown derby hat, worn in the house, for a stage detective."

"What do I do?" asked Arthur.

"Do? Why, rustle business for the show. We ought to get a pretty good play on a convict picture, with all this interest in Garner. If we get a fair play, I'll pay you three dollars. If it's good, I'll make it five, and if you can figure some way to get some publicity for us, I'll make it ten. Wait a minute!"

He dug into a pigeonhole of his desk, and fished out a bit of hair and a small piece of brown grease chalk. The piece of hair he pasted upon Arthur Townsend's upper lip, and with the brown chalk he drew a long, diagonal scar, extending from the outer corner of the tall boy's left eye to the corner of his mouth.

"There you are!" he said, handing Arthur a newspaper which showed a full-length picture of Garner, the escaped convict. "Six feet two—that's about right—small mustache, scar on left cheek. Get out in front now, and let's hear you holler good and loud. "The Amateur Convict," greatest motion picture ever produced—that's your spiel."

Arthur got out in front and "hollered." A girl with gorgeous yellow hair and beautiful pink cheeks got into the ticket box, uncovered the hole in the front glass, and proceeded with an important job of personal manicuring. Arthur's "spiel," in a voice that carried half a block, drew in a trickle of patronage for the greatest motion picture ever produced. Several fellows he knew hurried by, but merely glanced at him, without recognition.

He felt lonely, somehow, right here on Main Street. Also, while he didn't expect to jam the theater during the morning hours, the audience seemed likely to be unduly meager. From the way things looked now, he reasoned, the manager would probably pay him three dollars for one day and can him.

Also, with a job like this, how could he get off to argue with Dr. Marston for a thousand-dollar check toward the children's hospital fund?

He strolled down the street, bawling his invitation to "The Amateur Convict," greatest motion picture ever produced," and grinned when two giggling girls sized him up and agreed that he looked exactly like Garner.

There was another picture show at the end of the block, where a feeble thing entitled "Lured by the Great White Way" was advertised by lurid posters. Approaching this competitive attraction, Arthur bawled the louder, and had the excruciating satisfaction of seeing two middle-aged women, who had been gazing at the posters, hesitate, then start up the street to view "The Amateur Convict."

Fine stuff! If he could get the business that was going to waste here, he might stir up a house that would earn him five dollars instead of three. If the manager came out, and was a big guy, so that Arthur could pick a fight and beat him, it would surely make publicity worth ten dollars. So he began to proselyte right in front of the theater. The manager came out, all right, but he was too small to fight, and Arthur strolled back to his own bailiwick, herding four customers ahead of him.

You never can tell. The first two customers paid their money, got their tickets and change, and went in to see the show. The third man, an elderly gentleman who looked like an emeritus professor, tendered a twenty-dollar bill, took his ticket, and went in.

But it was not the elderly gentleman who picked up nineteen dollars and seventy-five cents in change—not at all! The elderly gentleman forgot the change entirely, and the rat-faced man right behind picked up the money, took a step to the sidewalk, and made off at a half run.

Arthur had not noticed, and the girl at the window did not notice, either, until the rat-faced man had got clear away. Then she put her mouth to the hole in the glass and shrieked:

"Stop, thief!"

She signaled vigorously to Arthur, who at once leaped into pursuit. The girl, who had let herself out of her glass cage, followed as closely as she could, yelling:

"Stop him! Stop him!"

### III

It is no ordinary sight, upon the main street of any city or village, to see a man in convict clothes running at full speed.

The spectacle aroused unusual interest, and a good deal of alarm, in this particular place, and upon this particular morning, when the local newspaper had devoted its first page to an account of the spectacular escape of a convict.

The thief had stopped, and lost himself, in the first traffic jam; but Arthur, not knowing this, pounded on, dodging in and out between pedestrians, while the ticket-office girl, now well in the rear, continued to shout:

"Stop him!"

Pretty soon it became evident to Arthur that, in place of him chasing a thief, a crowd at a respectful distance was pursuing a man in convict clothes who was tearing up the sidewalk at a breakneck pace.

A confusion of voices in the rear urged those ahead to stop him. Those ahead, upon sight of a man in striped clothes, with a small mustache and a scar, heading their way at top speed, politely stepped aside to let him pass. Then, when it was quite safe to do so, they joined in the chase and the shouting.

Arthur realized, even as he ran, that he might, if he wished, simply stop, explain that he was not really Garner, but only a motion-picture imitation, and go back to his job at the theater; but there would be small sport in that. It would be more fun, and perhaps worth publicity that would pay him ten dollars, if he could give his pursuers the slip.

Now he came abreast the Metropolitan Block, and, with no definite idea as to what he would do next, he dived through the open doorway leading to the lobby. An elevator stood with the door open and nobody inside but the operator.

"Outside, you!" Arthur yelled at the frightened boy.

He hurled the youth into the lobby, slammed the door, and threw the lever to start the car.

The car shot up. Arthur thought hard and fast. It would be no sport at all to be trapped at the top of the building. But—hold on! Old Dr. Marston had offices on the top floor, and the doctor was an old friend, who had mended Arthur's wing when he broke it playing football.

He would appeal to Dr. Marston to conceal him until the pursuit was over, and afterward he would have a heart-to-heart talk with the doc on the subject of a nice thousand-dollar donation to the children's



hospital. Old Marston was a good scout, and would surely listen to reason.

And so he made a non-stop run and a good landing, ran down the hall to a door marked "Dr. Marston, Private," opened the door, and jumped into the room.

Dr. Marston, a little man with a white goatee, sat at a flat-topped desk, writing in a big check book. He threw up his head at the sound of the opening door, gave one look, and, before Arthur had time to say a word, raised both hands high above his head, letting his fountain pen clatter on to the floor.

"I know you," he said in a quaking voice. "You're Garner. Well, Garner, name it!"

This was something like! Arthur immediately adjusted his program to the revised situation. It had not occurred to him at all that Dr. Marston would really think him the escaped convict.

"I want nothing for myself," he said, in the hoarse voice affected by stage bandits; "but the children's hospital needs from you a check for one thousand dollars. Work fast! Here's your pen."

The doctor took the pen, which Arthur had picked up for him, shook down the ink in it, and wrote the check. When he had finished, Arthur leaned forward, tore it from its stub, and jumped through a side door into a room which he knew to be the doctor's laboratory. Give him half a minute more—

He had shucked the striped suit and cap, and had them rolled into a wad and wrapped in a newspaper, when the hall broke into a hubbub. He grabbed off the false mustache, rammed it into a coat pocket, and removed the chalked scar from his cheek by a swipe with a convenient towel. It was now Arthur Townsend, ex-collegiate, in a green cap with red topknot, who stepped into the hall.

"If you're looking for the convict," he said to a man in a brown derby hat, "he went into Dr. Marston's private office about two minutes ago."

#### IV

Two elevator cars stood with open doors—his own private car, and the car which had carried up the pursuing mob. Into this latter he stepped. The operator, reluctant to leave, nevertheless obeyed the signal from the starter in the lobby, and let her down. They picked up a good load, and

Arthur strolled out with the crowd at the street floor.

He felt of the folded check in his pocket, and walked up the street, thinking. As to the means by which he had secured the check, his conscience hurt him not at all. Dr. Marston was a childless widower, and rich. Ordinary methods would probably have prevailed, in any case.

Of course, the doctor would probably stop payment on the check. Arthur didn't want him to do such a thing as that, because he was strong for this kid hospital himself, and he would particularly like to do a good turn for his mother, who had always stood up for him.

He guessed he had better go back and have a talk with Dr. Marston. Then he guessed again, having a new idea.

He walked rapidly up the street, around a corner, to the office of the *Evening Tribune*, where he inquired for Miss Abbott, an old-time friend of his mother. Facing this lady, in her cubby-hole of a private office, across a littered typewriter stand, he explained:

"If you could possibly arrange it, Miss Abbott, I know that mother would like awfully well to have you run a picture of this check in to-night's paper. Fact is, the doctor didn't very much want to give it to me, and—"

"I understand. It might possibly be stopped, but if the doctor saw it in the paper, why— Your mother and I, Arthur, are old hands at this sort of thing. The good doctor will have the pleasure of seeing his name in the paper to-night, with a nice little story about his generosity and public spirit. If you'll just wait a few minutes, I'll have the cut made, and then you can take the check back."

Well, that was that! Arthur strolled into the big local room. It was nearly noon, and the place was vibrant with the clatter of typewriters, foul with tobacco smoke, strewn with discarded copy paper and cigarette butts. At a big table near where Arthur stood sat a thin man, from whose mouth drooped a dead fag. He had hair like wet shoestrings, he wore a green eye shade, and his sleeves were rolled well above his elbows.

"Well!" barked the thin man, addressing an old tillicum of Arthur, one Pete Parks.

"It's a good hoax story, and that's all," said Parks, who had swung up to the desk,

puffing a little from his climb up the stairs. "Seems this Bijou Dream Theater, putting on a picture show called 'The Amateur Convict,' advertised for a man to wear convict clothes and ballyhoo out in front. The manager picked a big fellow for the job, because the film company had sent him a big suit, and then he fixed this chap up with a false mustache and painted a scar on him, to make him look like Garner, the escaped convict. Well, about eleven o'clock, this ballyhoo chap snared some trade from the show down the street, including an absent-minded man who walked off without picking up the change from twenty dollars, and Rat Fogarty hooked on to the change and ran. The fellow dressed up like Garner chased Fogarty, and the crowd got the idea that he was Garner running up the street. Cop caught Fogarty at the corner, and made him spit up his grab."

"Well?"

"I'm telling you, chief, fast as I can. This fellow dressed up like Garner ducked into the Metropolitan Building, hopped an elevator, and absolutely disappeared. That's all—simply disappeared, without a trace."

"Hell!" said the man with shoestring hair and the dead fag. He removed the fag and threw it on the floor. "Write about two sticks."

The reporter moved over to his typewriter stand.

"Who was the boy—the boy dressed up to look like Garner?" the city editor called after him.

"The picture-show man didn't know. Never thought to ask his name."

"You didn't get much of that story, did you, Pete?"

Ignorant as he was of the points necessary to make a news story, Arthur saw at once that he was in position to furnish the two facts now lacking—the identity of the amateur convict and the method used in escaping from the top of the Metropolitan Building. With these facts added, there certainly should be all the makings of good publicity.

He stepped up to the desk.

"Excuse me, sir, but I can tell you more about the amateur bandit. You see, I'm the man."

"You are! Who are you?"

"Why, my name is Townsend—Arthur Townsend."

"The mayor's son? Holy jumping Jehoshaphat! Parks!"

Then things moved. In less than a minute Arthur found himself being photographed, in street clothes and in the convict rig—which he unwrapped and got into—while Parks shot questions.

He told the whole story, except only that part of it which related to the doctor. Here he slurred the narrative, by simply stating that he had stepped into the doctor's laboratory to shuck the convict clothes. From Parks he learned that the doctor had admitted to the police that the bandit had stepped into his office for a moment, and then passed on into the laboratory, the doctor thereafter seeing him no more.

## V

BUSINESS at the Bijou Dream, showing "The Amateur Convict," picked up wonderfully after the newsboys started to shout:

"Mayor's son plays bandit! Getcher *Evening Tribune!* Mayor's son plays bandit!"

Instead of a scurrying audience, which really was more a procession than an audience, Arthur found that he now had as hearers a grinning fringe of people who parked themselves along the outer edge of the sidewalk, and who seemed to find much pleasure in looking him over and comparing him with the pictures in the paper.

Among them Arthur recognized sundry old school pals, grinning, and older persons—friends of his father and mother—who did not seem to find the situation exactly humorous, though it certainly was more or less interesting. There were some girls, too, who would josh him ever afterward. For example, there was Susie Watson, office girl for Dr. Marston, who evidently had sneaked out by throwing a coat over her white uniform.

"See 'The Amateur Convict,' folks!" Arthur bawled. "Greatest motion picture ever produced! Appearing in person outside, the mayor's son. Look me over, folks, look me over; and then step up and buy your tickets for 'The Amateur Convict.' New show just starting!"

Among those who stepped forward at this invitation was Susie Watson; but instead of buying a ticket, she handed Arthur a note. Arthur did not pause to read it. He was too busy.

And now he saw a familiar closed car draw up to the curb across the street, and from it there stepped two very much agitated parents. Arthur watched them thread their way across the street and take up a position on the curb. These were the people who had hustled him off with half a breakfast, and with threats that he must hereafter pay board.

"See 'The Amateur Convict,' folks!" he bawled. "Greatest motion picture ever produced! Appearing in person, the mayor's son. I'm what they call the ballyhoo, folks. I'm the free show, but the real show's inside, and costs you only twenty-five cents, a quarter of a dollar!"

He rather expected that his father would step forward and take him by the arm, or perhaps by the ear, and lead him hence. It would not have surprised him to see his mother faint, or have hysterics or something. They appeared, however, to have decided in advance upon a program. They walked resolutely, ticketless, past the astonished doorkeeper, evidently in search of the manager.

All right! They'd find out, Arthur guessed, that the manager thought he was some pumpkins when it came to drumming up trade for a picture show. At that, he didn't care to have the manager come out and call him in, before all this fine audience; so he extended a final invitation to enter, strolled into the theater, and found a seat on the stairs leading to the balcony.

He wished for a cigarette. Although he knew that he could not smoke here, he felt for one anyway, and found, in the pocket of his convict suit, the note that Susie Watson had handed him. This he opened and read by the light from a flash light borrowed from an usher.

He grinned and handed back the flash light. Just then the manager came from the office, evidently in search of him.

"Right here, chief!" said Arthur, and followed him into the office.

"This man tells us," said Mr. Townsend, "that he has engaged you, for ten dollars a day, to put on this utterly absurd impersonation."

"Glad to hear for sure that it's going to be ten dollars," replied Arthur. "That'll leave me eight dollars over my board."

Mrs. Townsend sniffed at this, but said nothing. Mr. Townsend continued:

"I need not go into details, Arthur, because you have some sense, even though

you have not shown much to-day. This thing distresses your mother and myself very much. Money isn't everything, Arthur, and I am willing to admit that I was a bit hasty this morning—"

"Wait a minute," broke in the manager. "It's as I was saying to your father, son. You're too good a man for a ballyhoo act. This convict thing quits to-night. The paper says that Garner was caught hiding under the hay in the loft of the prison barn. The interest in that case is dead, and it just happens that this particular convict show is particularly rotten, so that I'm glad to take it off. I want you to finish your ballyhoo to-day, and then start in to-morrow to learn the motion picture business as my assistant—sort of lad of all work, at first."

"Much obliged," said Arthur, "but the fact is—"

"I'll not have you getting up stunts for a picture show!" broke in Mr. Townsend.

Mrs. Townsend dabbed her eyes. Arthur felt sorry for her.

"The fact is," Arthur continued, "that I don't really fancy this picture-show business. There's no need in us all getting excited about it. I've got a note here from Dr. Marston"—he produced it—"and it seems that the doctor is everlastingly grateful to me because, after I sort of held him up for a thousand dollars for mother's kid hospital, I didn't give the facts to the reporter. He says that if I had, he'd have been the joke of the town. You see, mother, he took me for a convict, sure enough. I'll tell you all about it when I get time."

"Well," said Mr. Townsend testily, "what's all this got to do with whether you do or do not continue working at this place?"

"I'm getting to it, dad. It seems from this note that the doctor has a big scheme for selling logged-off land to town folks. He's going to sell them a piece of land, and give them, free, a course in duck raising. He wants a man to lecture in small towns—a man with a good speaking voice—and afterward conduct the duck school; and he's selected me for the job."

"Well, I'll be—"

"Edward," said Mrs. Townsend, rising unsteadily, and going over to embrace her son, "I told you, only this morning, that Arthur has a fine speaking voice and knows absolutely everything about ducks!"

# The Girl from Hollywood

A MODERN DRAMA OF CITY AND COUNTRY LIFE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Author of "Tarzan of the Apes," "A Princess of Mars," etc.

## XXVII

FEDERAL officers, searching the hills, found the camp above Jackknife Cañon. They collected a number of empty bottles bearing labels identical with those on the bottles in the cases carried by the burros, and those found in Custer Pennington's room. That was all they discovered, except that the camp was located on the Pennington property.

The district attorney, realizing the paucity of evidence calculated to convict the prisoner on any serious charge, was inclined to drop the prosecution; but the prohibition enforcement agents, backed by a band of women, most of whom had never performed a woman's first duty to the state and society, and therefore had ample time to meddle in affairs far beyond the scope of their intellects, seized upon the prominence of the Pennington name to gain notoriety for themselves on the score that the conviction of a member of a prominent family would have an excellent moral effect upon the community at large.

Just how they arrived at this conclusion it is difficult to discern. Similarly one might argue that if it could be proved that the Pope was a pickpocket, it would be tremendously effective in regenerating the morals of the world.

Be that as it may, the works of the righteous were not without fruit, for on the 12th of October Custer Pennington was found guilty and sentenced to six months in the county jail for having had several hundred dollars' worth of stolen whiskey in his possession. He was neither surprised nor disheartened. His only concern was for the sensibilities of his family, and these—rep-

resented at the trial in the person of his father—seemed far from overwhelmed, for the colonel was unalterably convinced of his son's innocence.

Eva, who had remained at home with her mother, was more deeply affected than the others, though through a sense of injustice rather than of shame. Shannon, depressed by an unwarranted sense of responsibility for the wrong that Custer had suffered, and chagrined that force of circumstances should have prevented her from saving the Penningtons from a stain upon their escutcheon, found it increasingly difficult to continue her intimacy with these loved friends. Carrying in her heart the knowledge and the proof of his innocence, she regarded herself as a traitor among them, and in consequence held herself more and more aloof from their society, first upon one pretext and then upon another.

At a loss to account for her change toward them, Eva, in a moment of depression, attributed it to the disgrace of Custer's imprisonment.

"She is ashamed to associate with the family of a—a—jailbird!" she cried.

"I don't believe anything of the kind," replied the colonel. "Shannon's got too much sense, and she's too loyal. That's all damned poppycock!"

"I'm sure she couldn't feel that way," said Mrs. Pennington. "She has been just as positive in her assertions of Custer's innocence as any of us."

"You might as well think the same about Guy," said the colonel. "He's scarcely been up here since Custer's arrest."

"He's very busy on a new story. Anyway, I asked him about that very thing, and offered to break the engagement if he



felt our disgrace too keenly to want to marry into the family."

The colonel drew her down to his knee.

"You silly little girl!" he said. "Do you suppose that this has made any difference in the affection that Guy or any other of our real friends feel for us? Not in the slightest. Even if Cus were guilty, they would not change. Those who did we would be better off not to know. I am rather jealous of the Pennington honor myself, but I have never felt that this affair is any reflection upon it, and you need not."

"But I can't help it, popsy. My brother, my dear brother, in jail with a lot of thieves and murderers and horrible people like that! It is just too awful! I lie awake at night thinking about it. I am ashamed to go to the village, for fear some one will point at me and say, 'There goes the girl whose brother is in jail!'"

"You are taking it much too hard, dear," said her mother. "One would think that our boy was really guilty."

"Oh, if he really were, I should kill myself!"

The only person, other than the officious reformers, to derive any happiness from young Pennington's fate was Slick Allen. He occupied a cell not far from Custer's, and there were occasions when they were thrown together. Several times Allen saw fit to fling gibes at his former employer, much to the amusement of his fellows. They were usually indirect.

One day, as Custer was passing, Allen remarked in a loud tone:

"There's a lot more of these damn fox-trottin' dudes that put on airs, but ain't nothin' but common thieves!"

Pennington turned and faced him.

"You remember what you got the last time you tried calling me names, Allen? Well, don't think for a minute that just because we're in jail I won't hand you the same thing again some day, if you get too funny. The trouble with you, Allen, is that you are laboring under the misapprehension that you are a humorist. You're not, and if I were you I wouldn't make faces at the only man in this jail who knows about you, and Bartolo, and—Gracial. Don't forget Gracial!"

Allen paled, and his eyes closed to two very narrow slits. He made no more observations concerning Pennington; but he devoted much thought to him, trying to

arrive at some reasonable explanation of the man's silence, when it was evident that he must have sufficient knowledge of the guilt of others to clear himself of the charge upon which he had been convicted.

To Allen's hatred of Custer was now added a real fear, for he had been present when Bartolo killed Gracial. The other two witnesses had been Mexicans, and Allen had no doubt but that if Bartolo were accused, the three of them would swear that the American committed the murder.

One of the first things to do, when he was released from jail, would be to do away with Bartolo. Bartolo disposed of, the other witnesses would join with Allen to lay the guilt upon the departed. Such pleasant thoughts occupied the time and mind of Slick Allen, as did also his plans for paying one Wilson Crumb a little debt he felt due this one-time friend.

Nor was Crumb free from apprehension for the time that would see Allen's jail sentence fulfilled. He well knew the nature of the man. It is typical of drug addicts to disregard the effect of their acts further than the immediate serving of their own interests, and the director had encompassed Allen's arrest merely to meet the emergency of the moment. Later, as time gave him the opportunity to consider what must inevitably follow Allen's release, he began to take thought as to means whereby he might escape the just deserts of his treachery.

He knew enough of Allen's activities to send the man to a Federal prison for a long term, but these matters he could not divulge without equally incriminating himself. There was, however, one little item of Allen's past which might be used against him without signal danger to Crumb, and that was the murder of Gracial. It would not be necessary for Crumb to appear in the matter at all. An anonymous letter to the police would suffice to direct suspicion of the crime toward Allen, and to insure for Crumb, if not permanent immunity, at least a period of reprieve.

With the natural predilection of the weak for avoiding or delaying the consummation of their intentions, Crumb postponed the writing of this letter of accusation. There was no cause for hurry, he argued, since Allen's time would not expire until the 6th of the following August.

Crumb led a lonely life after the departure of Gaza. His infatuation for the girl had as closely approximated love as a crea-

ture of his type could reach. He had come to depend upon her, and to look forward to finding her at the Vista del Paso bungalow on his return from the studio. Since her departure his evenings had been unbearable, and with the passing weeks he developed a hatred for the place that constantly reminded him of his loss. He had been so confident that she would have to return to him after she had consumed the small quantity of morphine he had allotted her that only after the weeks had run into months did he realize that she had probably gone out of his life forever. How she had accomplished it he could not understand, unless she had found means of obtaining the narcotic elsewhere.

Not knowing where she had gone, he had no means of searching for her. In his own mind, however, he was convinced that she must have returned to Los Angeles. Judging others by himself, he could conceive of no existence that would be supportable beyond the limits of a large city, where the means for the gratification of his vice might be obtained.

That Gaza de Lure had successfully thrown off the fetters into which he had tricked her never for a moment entered his calculations. Finally, however, it was borne in upon him that there was little likelihood of her returning; and so depressing had become the familiar and suggestive furnishings of the Vista del Paso bungalow that he at last gave it up, stored his furniture, and took a room at a local hotel. He took with him, carefully concealed in a trunk, his supply of narcotics—which he did not find it so easy to dispose of since the departure of his accomplice.

During the first picture in which Grace Evans had worked with him, Crumb had become more and more impressed with her beauty and the subtle charm of her refinement, which appealed to him by contrast with the ordinary surroundings and personalities of the K. K. S. studio. There was a quiet restfulness about her which soothed his diseased nerves, and after Gaza's desertion he found himself more and more seeking her society. As was his accustomed policy, his attentions were at first so slight, and increased by such barely perceptible degrees, that, taken in connection with his uniform courtesy, they gave the girl no warning of his ultimate purposes.

The matter of the test had shocked and disgusted her for the moment; but the thing

having been done, and no harm coming from it, she began to consider even that with less revulsion than formerly. The purpose of it she had never been able to fathom; but if Crumb had intended it to place him insidiously upon a plane of greater intimacy with the girl, he had succeeded. That the effect was subjective rendered it none the less effective.

Added to these factors in the budding intimacy between the director and the extra girl was the factor which is always most potent in similar associations—the fear that the girl holds of offending a potent ally, and the hope of propitiating a power in which lies the potentiality of success upon the screen.

Lunches at Frank's, dinners at the Ship, dances at the Country Club, led by easy gradations to more protracted parties at the Sunset Inn and the Green Mill. The purposes of Crumb's shrewdly conceived and carefully executed plan were twofold. Primarily, he sought a companionship to replace that of which Gaza de Lure had robbed him. Secondarily, he needed a new tool to assist in the disposal of the considerable store of narcotics that he had succeeded in tricking Allen and his accomplices into delivering to him with the understanding that he would divide the profits of the sales with them—which, however, Crumb had no intention of doing if he could possibly avoid it.

In much the same manner that he had tricked Gaza de Lure, he tricked Grace Evans into the use of cocaine; and after that the rest was easy. Renting another and less pretentious bungalow on Circle Terrace, he installed the girl there, and transferred the trunk of narcotics to her care, retaining his room at the hotel for himself.

Grace's fall was more easily accomplished than in the case of Gaza, and was more complete, for the former had neither the courage nor the strength of character that had enabled the other to withstand the more degrading advances of her tempter. To assume that the girl made no effort to oppose his importunings would be both unfair and unjust, for both heredity and training had endowed her with a love of honor and a horror of the sordidness of vice; but the gradual undermining of her will by the subtle inroads of narcotics rendered her powerless to withstand the final assault upon the citadel of her scruples.

One evening, toward the middle of October, they were dining together at the Winter Garden. Crumb had bought an evening paper on the street, and was glancing through it as they sat waiting for their dinner to be served. Presently he looked up at the girl seated opposite him.

"Didn't you come from a little jerk-water place up the line, called Ganado?" he asked.

She nodded affirmatively.

"Why?"

"Here's a guy from there been sent up for bootlegging—fellow by the name of Pennington."

She half closed her eyes, as if in pain.

"I know," she said. "It has been in the newspapers for the last couple of weeks."

"Did you know him?"

"Yes—he has been out to see me since his arrest, and he called up once."

"Did you see him?"

"No—I would be ashamed to see any decent person!"

"Decent!" snorted Crumb. "You don't call a damned bootlegger decent, do you?"

"I don't believe he ever did it," said the girl. "I have known him all my life, and his family. I'm certain that he couldn't have done it."

A sudden light came into Crumb's eye.

"By God!" he exclaimed, bringing his fist down upon the table.

"What is the matter?" Grace inquired.

"Well, wouldn't that get you?" he exclaimed. "I never connected you at all!"

"What do you mean?"

"This fellow Pennington may not be guilty, but I know who is."

"How do you know? I don't understand you. Why do you look at me that way?"

"Well, if that isn't the best ever!" exclaimed the man. "And here you have been handing me a long line of talk about the decent family you came from, and how it would kill them if they knew you sniffed a little coke now and then. Well, wouldn't that get you? You certainly are a fine one to preach!"

"I don't understand you," said the girl. "What has this to do with me? I am not related to Mr. Pennington, but it would make no difference if I were, for I know he never did anything of the sort. The idea of a Pennington bootlegging! Why, they have more money than they need, and always have had."

"It isn't Pennington who ought to be in jail," he said. "It's your brother."

She looked at him in surprise, and then she laughed.

"You must have been hitting it up strong to-day, Wilson," she said.

"Oh, no, I haven't; but it's funny I never thought of it before. Allen told me a long while ago that a fellow by the name of Evans was handling the hootch for him. He said he got a job from the Penningtons as stable man in order to be near the camp where they had the stuff cached in the hills. He described Evans as a young blood, so I guess there isn't any doubt about it. You have a brother—I've heard you speak of him."

"I don't believe you," she said.

"It don't make any difference whether you believe me or not. I could put your brother in the pen, and they've only got Pennington in the county jail. All they could get on him, according to this article, was having stolen goods in his possession; but your brother was in on the whole proposition. It was hidden in his hay barn. He delivered it to a fellow who came up there every week, ostensibly to get hay, and your brother collected the money. Gosh, they'd send him up for sure if I ever tipped them off to what I know!"

And thus was fashioned the power he used to force her to his will.

A week later the bungalow on Circle Terrace was engaged, and Grace Evans took up the work of peddling narcotics, which Shannon Burke had laid down a few months before. With this difference—Gaza de Lure had shared in the profits of the traffic, while Grace Evans got nothing more than her living, and what drugs she craved for her personal use.

Her life, her surroundings, every environment of this new and terrible world into which her ambition had introduced her, tended rapidly to ravish her beauty. She faded with a rapidity that was surprising even to Crumb—surprising and annoying. He had wanted her for her beauty, and now she was losing it; but still he must keep her, because of her value in his nefarious commerce.

As weeks and months went by, he no longer took pleasure in her society, and was seldom at the bungalow save when he came to demand an accounting and to collect the proceeds of her sales. Her pleas and reproaches had no other effect upon him than



to arouse his anger. One day, when she clung to him, begging him not to desert her, he pushed her roughly from him so that she fell, and in falling she struck the edge of a table and hurt herself.

This happened in April. On the following day Custer Pennington, his term in the county jail expired, was liberated.

### XXVIII

CUSTER'S long hours of loneliness had often been occupied with plans against the day of his liberation. That Grace had not seen him or communicated with him since his arrest and conviction had been a source of wonder and hurt to him. He recalled many times the circumstance of the telephone call, with a growing belief that Grace had been there, but had refused to talk with him. Nevertheless, he was determined to see her before he returned to Ganado.

He had asked particularly that none of his family should come to Los Angeles on the day of his release, but that the roadster should be sent up on the preceding day and left in a garage for him. He lost no time, after quitting the jail, in getting his machine and driving out to Hollywood, to the house where Grace had boarded.

The woman who answered his ring told him that Grace no longer lived there. At first she was loath to give him any information as to the girl's whereabouts; but after some persuasion she gave him a number on Circle Terrace, and in that direction Pennington turned his car.

As he left his car before the bungalow, and approached the building, he could see into the interior through the screen door, for it was a warm day in April, and the inner door was open. As he mounted the few steps leading to the porch, he saw a woman cross the living room, into which the door opened. She moved hurriedly, disappearing through a doorway opposite and closing the door after her. Though he had but a brief glimpse of her in the darkened interior, he knew that it was Grace, so familiar were every line of her figure and every movement of her carriage.

It was several minutes after Custer rang before a Japanese appeared at the doorway. It was the same Japanese "schoolboy" who had served as general factotum at the Vista del Paso bungalow. He opened the screen door a few inches and looked inquiringly at the caller.

"I wish to see Miss Evans," said Custer.

He took a card case from his pocket and handed a card to the servant, who looked blankly at the card and then at the caller, finally shaking his head stupidly and closing the door.

"No here," he said. "Nobody home."

Pennington recalled once more the affair of the telephone. He knew that he had just seen Grace inside the bungalow. He had come to talk with her, and he intended to do so.

He laid his hand on the handle of the door and jerked it open. The Jap, evidently lacking in discretion, endeavored to prevent him from entering. First the guardian clawed at the door in an effort to close it, and then, very foolishly, he attempted to push Pennington out on to the porch. The results were disastrous to the Jap.

Crossing the living room, Custer rapped on the door through which he had seen Grace go, calling her by name. Receiving no reply, he flung the door open. Facing him was the girl he was engaged to marry.

With her back against the dresser, Grace stood at the opposite end of the room. Her disheveled hair fell about her face, which was overspread with a sickly pallor. Her wild, staring eyes were fixed upon him. Her mouth, drooping at the corners, tremulously depicted a combination of terror and anger.

"Grace!" he exclaimed.

She still stood staring at him for a moment before she spoke.

"What do you mean," she demanded at last, "by breaking into my bedroom? Get out! I don't want to see you. I don't want you here!"

He crossed the room and put a hand upon her shoulder.

"My God, Grace," he cried, "what is the matter? What has happened to you?"

"Nothing has happened," she mumbled. "There is nothing the matter with me. I suppose you want me to go back with the rest of the rubes. I am through with the damned country—and country jakes, too!" she added.

"You mean that you don't want me here, Grace? That you don't love me?" he asked.

"Love you?" She broke into a disagreeable laugh. "Why, you poor rube, I never want to see you again!"

He stood looking at her for a moment longer, and then he turned slowly and walked out of the bungalow and down to



his car. When he had gone, the girl threw herself face down upon the bed and burst into uncontrollable sobs. For the moment she had risen triumphant above the clutches of her sordid vice. For that brief moment she had played her part to save the man she loved from greater torture and humiliation in the future—at what a price only she could ever know.

Custer found them waiting for him on the east porch as he drove up to the ranch house. The new freedom and the long drive over the beautiful highway through the clear April sunshine, with the green hills at his left and the lovely valley spread out upon his right hand to some extent alleviated the depression that had followed the shock of his interview with Grace; and when he alighted from the car he seemed quite his normal self.

Eva was the first to reach him. She fairly threw herself upon her brother, laughing and crying in a hysteria of happiness. His mother was smiling through her tears, while the colonel blew his nose violently, remarking that it was "a hell of a time of year to have a damned cold!"

Custer joked a little about his imprisonment, but he soon saw that the mere mention of it had a most depressing effect upon Eva; so he did not revert to the subject again in her presence. He confined himself to plying them with a hundred questions about happenings on the ranch during his long absence, the condition of the stock, and the crop outlook for the season.

As he considered the effect his undeserved jail sentence had produced upon the sensibilities of his sister, he was doubly repaid for the long months of confinement that he had suffered in order to save her from the still greater blow of having the man she was to marry justly convicted of a far more serious crime. He saw no reason now why she should ever learn the truth. The temporary disgrace of his incarceration would soon be forgotten in the everyday run of work and pleasure that constituted the life of Ganado, and the specter of her hurt pride would no longer haunt her.

Custer was surprised that Guy and Mrs. Evans had not been of the party that welcomed his return. When he mentioned this, Eva told him that Mrs. Evans thought the Penningtons would want to have him all to themselves for a while, and that their neighbors were coming up after dinner.

And it was not until dinner that he asked after Shannon.

"We have seen very little of her since you left," explained his mother. "She returned Baldy soon after that, and bought the Senator from Mrs. Evans."

"I don't know what is the matter with the child," said the colonel. "She is as sweet as ever when we do see her, and she always asks after you and tells us that she believes in your innocence. She rides a great deal at night, but seldom, if ever, in the daytime. I don't think it is safe for a woman to ride alone in the hills at night, and I have told her so; but she says that she is not afraid, and that she loves the hills as well by night as by day."

"Eva has missed her company very much," said Mrs. Pennington. "I was afraid that we might have done something to offend her, but none of us could think what it could have been."

"I thought she was ashamed of us," said Eva.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Of course that's nonsense," said Custer. "She knows as well as the rest of you that I was innocent."

He was thinking how much more surely Shannon knew his innocence than any of them.

During dinner Eva regained her old-time spirit. More than once the tears came to Mrs. Pennington's eyes as she realized that once more their little family was united, and that the pall of sorrow that had weighed so heavily upon them for the past six months had at last lifted, revealing again the sunshine of the daughter's heart, which had never been the same since their boy had gone away.

"Oh, Cus!" exclaimed Eva. "The most scrumptious thing is going to happen, and I'm so glad that you are going to be here too. It's going to be perfectly gorgeristic! There'll be a whole regiment of them, and they're going to be camped right up at the mouth of Jackknife. I can scarcely wait until they come—can you?"

"I think I might manage," said her brother; "at least until you tell me what you are talking about."

"Pictures," exclaimed Eva. "Isn't it simplimetic gorgeristic? And they may be here a whole month!"

"What in the world is the child talking about?" asked Custer, appealing to his mother.

"Your father—" Mrs. Pennington started to explain.

"Oh, don't tell him!" cried Eva. "I want to tell him myself."

"You have been explaining for several minutes," said Custer; "but you haven't said anything yet."

"Well, I'll start at the beginning, then. They're going to have Indians, and cow-boys, and—"

"That sounds more like the finish," suggested Custer.

"Don't interrupt me! They're going to take a picture on Ganado."

Custer turned toward his father with a look of surprise.

"You needn't blame papa," said Eva.

"It was all my fault—or, rather, I should say our good fortune is all due to me. You see, papa wasn't going to let them come at first, but the cutest man came up to see him—a nice, short, fat little man, and he rubbed his hands together and said: 'Vell, colonel?' Papa told him that he had never allowed any picture companies on the place; but I happened to be there, and that was all that saved us, for I teased and teased until finally papa said that they could come, provided they didn't take any pictures up around the house. They didn't want to do that, for they're making a Western picture, and they said the scenery at the back of the ranch is just what they want. They're coming up in a few days, and it's going to be perfectly radiant, and maybe I'll get in the pictures!"

"If I thought so," said Custer, "I'd put a can of nitroglycerine under the whole works the moment they drove on to the property!" He was thinking of what the pictures had done for Grace Evans. "I am surprised that you permitted it, father," he said, turning to the colonel.

"I'm rather surprised myself," admitted the older Pennington; "but what was I to do, with that suave little location manager rubbing his hands and oiling me on one side, and this little rascal here pestering the life out of me on the other? I simply had to give in. I don't imagine any harm will come from it. They've promised to be very careful of all the property, and whenever any of our stock is used it will be handled by our own men."

"I suppose they are going to pay you handsomely for it," suggested Custer.

The colonel smiled.

"Well, that wasn't exactly mentioned,"

he said; "but I have a recollection that the location manager said something about presenting us with a fine set of stills of the ranch."

"Generous of them!" said Custer.

"They'll camp all over the shop, use our water, burn our firewood, and trample up our pasture, and in return they'll give us a set of photographs. Their liberality is truly marvelous!"

"Well, to tell you the truth," said the colonel, "after I found how anxious Eva was, I wouldn't have dared mention payment, for fear they might refuse to come and this young lady's life might be ruined in consequence!"

"What outfit is it?" asked the son.

"It's a company from the K. K. S., directed by a man by the name of Crumb."

"Wilson Crumb, the famous actor-director," added Eva. "How perfectly radiant! I danced with him in Los Angeles a year ago."

"Oh, that's the fellow, is it?" said Custer. "I have a hazy recollection that you were mad about him for some fifteen minutes after you reached home, but I have never heard you mention him since."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said Eva, "I had forgotten all about him until that perfectly gorgeous little loquacious manager mentioned him."

"Location manager," corrected her father.

"He was both."

"Yes, he was," said the colonel. "I rather hope he comes back. I haven't enjoyed any one so much since the days of Weber and Fields."

It was after eight o'clock when the Evanses arrived. Mrs. Evans was genuinely affected at seeing Custer again, for she was as fond of him as if he had been her own son. In Guy, Custer discovered a great change. The boy that he had left had become suddenly a man, quiet and reserved, with a shadow of sadness in his expression. His lesson had been a hard one, Custer knew, and the price that he had had to pay for it had left its indelible mark upon his sensitive character.

Guy's happiness at having Custer back again was overshadowed to some extent by the shame that he must always feel when he looked into the face of the man who had shouldered his guilt and taken the punishment which should have been his. The true purpose of Pennington's sacrifice could

never alter young Evans's realization of the fact that the part he had been forced to take had been that of a coward, a traitor, and a cad.

The first greetings over, Mrs. Evans asked Custer if he had seen Grace before he left Los Angeles.

"I saw her," he said, "and she is not at all well. I think Guy should go up there immediately, and try to bring her back. I meant to speak to him about it this evening."

"She is not seriously ill?" exclaimed Mrs. Evans.

"I cannot say," replied Custer. "I doubt if she is seriously ill in a physical sense, but she is not well. I could see that. She has changed a great deal. I think you should lose no time, Guy," he added, turning to Grace's brother, "in going to Los Angeles and getting her. She has been gone almost a year. It is time she knew whether her dreams are to come true or not. From what I saw of her, I doubt if they have materialized."

"I will go to-morrow," said young Evans.

## XXIX

THE six months that had just passed had been months of indecision and sadness for Shannon Burke. Constantly moved by a conviction that she should leave the vicinity of Ganado and the Penningtons, she was held there by a force that she had not the power to overcome.

Never before since she had left her mother's home in the Middle West had she experienced the peace and content and happiness that her little orchard on the highway imparted to her life. The friendship of the Penningtons had meant more to her than anything that had hitherto entered her life; and to be near them, even if she saw them but seldom, constituted a constant bulwark against the assaults of her old enemy, which still occasionally assailed the ramparts of her will.

After the departure of Custer she had conscientiously observed what she considered to be his wishes as expressed in his reference comparing her with the girl friend of Cousin William, whom he had practically ordered out of the house. She had as far as possible avoided Eva's society; and though contemplation of the cause of this avoidance filled her with humiliation, and with a sense of the injustice of all that it im-

plied, she nevertheless felt it a duty to the man she loved to respect his every wish, however indirectly suggested.

That she might put herself in Eva's way as seldom as possible, Shannon had formed the habit of riding at those hours at which the Penningtons were not accustomed to ride. The habit of solitude grew upon her, and she loved the loneliness of the hills. They never oppressed her—she never feared them. They drew her to them and soothed her as a mother might have done. There she forgot her sorrows, and hope was stimulated to new life.

Especially when the old craving seized her did she long for the hills, and it was because of this that she first rode at night—on a night of brilliant moonlight that imparted to familiar scenes the weird beauties of a strange world. The experience was unique. It assumed the proportions of an adventure, and it lured her to other similar excursions.

Even the Senator felt the spell of enchantment. He stepped daintily with uppricked ears and arched neck, peering nervously into the depth of each shadowy bush. He leaped suddenly aside at the movement of a leaf, or halted, trembling and snorting, at the moon-bathed outlines of some jutting rock that he had passed a hundred times, unmoved, by day.

The moonlight rides led Shannon to others on moonless nights, so that she was often in the saddle when the valley slept. She invariably followed the same trail on these occasions, with the result that both she and the Senator knew every foot of it so well that they had traversed it beneath the blackness of heavy clouds, or when low fogs obliterated all but the nearest objects.

Never, in the hills, could her mind dwell upon depressing thoughts. Only cheerful reflections were her companions of those hours of solitude. She thought of the love that had come into her life, of the beauty of it, and of all that it had done to make life more worth the living; of the Penningtons and the example of red-blooded cleanliness that they set—decency without prudery; of her little orchard and the saving problems it had brought to occupy her mind and hands; of her horse and her horsemanship, two never-failing sources of companionship and pleasure which the Penningtons had taught her to love and enjoy.

On the morning after Custer's return, Guy started early for Los Angeles, while

Custer—Shannon not having joined them on their morning ride—resaddled the Apache after breakfast and rode down to her bungalow. He both longed to see her and dreaded the meeting; for, regardless of Grace's attitude and of the repulse she had given him, his honor bound him to her. Loyalty to the girl had been engendered by long years of association, during which friendship had grown into love by so gradual a process that it seemed to each of them that there had never been a time when they had not loved. Such attachments, formed in the heart of youth, hallowed by time, and fortified by the pride and honor of inherited chivalry, become a part of the characters of their possessors, and as difficult to uproot as those other habits of thought and action which differentiate one individual from another.

Custer had realized, in that brief interview of the day before, that Grace was not herself. What was the cause of her change he could not guess, since he was entirely unacquainted with the symptoms of narcotics. Even had a suspicion of the truth entered his mind, he would have discarded it as a vile slander upon the girl, as he had rejected the involuntary suggestion that she might have been drinking. His position was distressing for a man to whom honor was a fetish, since he knew that he still loved Grace, while at the same time realizing a still greater love for Shannon.

She saw him coming and came down the driveway to meet him, her face radiant with the joy of his return, and with that expression of love that is always patent to all but the object of its concern.

"Oh, Custer!" she cried. "I am so glad that you are home again! It has seemed years and years, rather than months, to all of us."

"I am glad to be home, Shannon. I have missed you, too. I have missed you all—everything—the hills, the valley, every horse and cow and little pig, the clean air, the smell of flowers and sage—all that is Ganado."

"You like it better than the city?"

"I shall never long for the city again," he said. "Cities are wonderful, of course, with their great buildings, their parks and boulevards, their fine residences, their lawns and gardens. The things that men have accomplished there fill a fellow with admiration; but how pitiful they really are compared with the magnificence that is ours!"

He turned and pointed toward the mountains. "Just think of those hills, Shannon, and the infinite, unthinkable power that uplifted such mighty monuments. Think of the countless ages that they have endured, and then compare them with the puny efforts of man. Compare the range of vision of the city dweller with ours. He can see across the street, and to the top of some tall building, which may look imposing; but place it beside one of our hills, and see what becomes of it. Place it in a ravine in the high Sierras, and you would have difficulty in finding it; and you cannot even think of it in connection with a mountain fifteen or twenty thousand feet in height. And yet the city man patronizes us country people, deploring the necessity that compels us to pursue our circumscribed existence."

"Pity him," laughed Shannon. "He is as narrow as his streets. His ideals can reach no higher than the pall of smoke that hangs over the roofs of his buildings. I am so glad, Custer, that you have given up the idea of leaving the country for the city!"

"I never really intended to," he replied. "I couldn't have left, on father's account; but now I can remain on my own as well as his, and with a greater degree of contentment. You see that my recent experience was a blessing in disguise."

"I am glad if some good came out of it; but it was a wicked injustice, and there were others as innocent as you who suffered fully as much—Eva especially."

"I know," he said. "She has been very lonely since I left, with Grace away, too; and they tell me that you have constantly avoided them. Why?"

He had dismounted and tied the Apache, and they were walking toward the porch. She stopped, and turned to look Custer squarely in the eyes.

"How could I have done otherwise?" she asked.

"I do not understand," he replied.

She could not hold her eyes to his as she explained, but looked down, her expression changing from happiness to one of shame and sadness.

"You forget that girl, the friend of Cousin William?" she asked.

"Oh, Shannon!" he cried, laying a hand impulsively upon her arm. "I told you that I wouldn't say that to you. I didn't want you to stay away. I have implicit confidence in you."



"No," she contradicted him. "In your heart you thought it, and perhaps you were right."

"No," he insisted. "Please don't stay away—promise me that you will not! You have hurt them all, and they are all so fond of you!"

"I am sorry, Custer. I would not hurt them. I love them all; but I thought I was doing the thing that you wished. There was so much that you did not understand—that you can never understand—and you were away where you couldn't know what was going on; so it seemed disloyal to do the thing I thought you would rather I didn't do."

"It's all over now," he said. "Let's start over again, forgetting all that has happened in the last six months and a half."

Again, as his hand lay upon her arm, he was seized with an almost uncontrollable desire to crush her to him. Two things deterred him—his loyalty to Grace, and the belief that his love would be unwelcome to Shannon.

### XXX

GUY EVANS swept over the broad, smooth highway at a rate that would have won him ten days in the jail at Santa Ana had his course led him through that village. The impression that Custer's words had implanted in his mind was that Grace was ill, for Pennington had not gone into the details of his unhappy interview with the girl, choosing to leave to her brother a realization of her changed condition, which would have been incredible to him even from the lips of so trusted a friend as Custer.

And so it was that when he approached the bungalow on Circle Terrace, and saw a coupé standing at the curb, he guessed at what it portended; for though there were doubtless hundreds of similar cars in the city, there was that about this one which suggested the profession of its owner. As Guy hurried up the walk to the front door, he was as positive that he would find Grace ill, and a doctor in attendance, as if some one had already told him so.

There was no response to his ring, and as the inner door was open he entered. A door on the opposite side of the living room was ajar. As Guy approached it, a man appeared in the doorway, and beyond him the visitor could see Grace lying, very white and still, upon a bed.

"Who are you—this woman's husband?" demanded the man in curt tones.

"I am her brother. What is the matter? Is she very ill?"

"Did you know of her condition?"

"I heard last night that she was not well, and I hurried up here. I live in the country. Who are you? What has happened? She is not—my God, she is not—"

"Not yet. Perhaps we can save her. I am a doctor. I was called by a Japanese, who said that he was a servant here. He must have left after he called me, for I have not seen him. Her condition is serious, and requires an immediate operation—an operation of such a nature that I must learn the name of her own physician, and have him present. Where is her husband?"

"Husband! My sister is not—" Guy ceased speaking, and went suddenly white. "My God, doctor, you don't mean that she—that my sister—oh, no, not that!"

He seized the other's arm beseechingly. The doctor laid his hand upon the younger man's shoulder.

"She had a fall night before last, and an immediate operation is imperative. Her condition is such that we cannot even take the risk of moving her to a hospital. I have my instruments in my car, but I should have help. Who is her doctor?"

"I do not know."

"I'll get some one. I have given her something to quiet her."

The doctor stepped to the telephone and gave a number. Evans entered the room where his sister lay. She was moving about restlessly and moaning, though it was evident that she was still unconscious.

Changed! Guy wondered that he had known her at all, now that he was closer to her. Her face was pinched and drawn. Her beauty was gone—every vestige of it. She looked old and tired and haggard, and there were terrible lines upon her face that stilled her brother's heart and brought the tears to his eyes.

He heard the doctor summoning an assistant and directing him to bring ether. Then he heard him go out of the house by the front door—to get his instruments, doubtless. The brother knelt by the girl's bed.

"Grace!" he whispered, and threw an arm about her.

Her lids fluttered, and she opened her eyes.

"Guy!"

She recognized him—she was conscious.

"Who did this?" he demanded. "What is his name?"

She shook her head.

"What is the use?" she asked. "It is done."

"Tell me!"

"You would kill him—and be punished. It would only make it worse—for—you—and mother. Let it die with me!"

"You are not going to die. Tell me, who is he? Do you love him?"

"I hate him!"

"How were you injured?"

"He threw me—against—a table."

Her voice was growing weaker. Choking back tears of grief and anger, the young man rose and stood beside her.

"Grace, I command you to tell me!"

His voice was low, but it was vibrant with power and authority. The girl tried to speak. Her lips moved, but she uttered no sound. Guy thought that she was dying, and taking her secret to the grave.

Her eyes moved to something beyond the foot of the bed, back to his, and back again to whatever she had been looking at, as if she sought to direct his attention to something in that part of the room. He followed the direction of her gaze. There was a dressing table there, and on it a photograph of a man in a silver frame. Guy stepped to the table and picked up the picture.

"This is he?"

His eyes demanded an answer. Her lips moved soundlessly, and weakly she nodded an affirmative.

"What is his name?"

She was too weak to answer him. She gasped, and her breath came flutteringly. The brother threw himself upon his knees beside the bed, and took her in his arms. His tears mingled with his kisses on her cheek. The doctor came then and drew him away.

"She is dead!" said the boy, turning away and covering his face with his hands.

"No," said the doctor, after a brief examination. "She is not dead. Get into the kitchen, and get some water to boiling. I'll be getting things ready in here. Another doctor will be here in a few minutes."

Glad of something to do, just to help, Guy hastened into the little kitchen. He found a kettle and a large pan, and put water in them to boil.

A moment later the doctor came in. He had removed his coat and vest and rolled

up his sleeves. He placed his instruments in the pan of water on the stove, and then he went to the sink and washed his hands. While he scrubbed, he talked. He was an efficient-looking, businesslike person, and he inspired Guy with confidence and hope.

"She has a fighting chance," he said.

"I've seen worse cases pull through. She's had a bad time, though. She must have been lying here for pretty close to twenty-four hours without any attention. I found her fully dressed on her bed—fully dressed except for what clothes she'd torn off in her pain. If some one had called a doctor yesterday at this time, it might have been all right. It may be all right even now. We'll do the best we can."

The bell rang.

"That's the doctor. Let him in, please."

Guy went to the door and admitted the second physician, who removed his coat and vest and went directly to the kitchen. The first doctor was entering the room where Grace lay. He turned and spoke to his colleague, greeting him; then he disappeared within the adjoining room. The second doctor busied himself about the sink, sterilizing his hands. Guy lighted another burner and put on another vessel with water in it.

A moment later the first doctor returned to the kitchen.

"It will not be necessary to operate, doctor," he said. "We were too late!"

His tone and manner were still very businesslike and efficient, but there was an expression of compassion in his eyes as he crossed the room and put his arm about Guy's shoulders.

"Come into the other room, my boy. I want to talk to you," he said.

Guy, dry-eyed, and walking almost as one in a trance, accompanied him to the little living room.

"You have had a hard blow," said the doctor. "What I am going to tell you may make it harder; but if she had been my sister I should have wanted to know about it. She is better off. The chances are that she didn't want to live. She certainly made no fight for life—not since I was called."

"Why should she want to die?" Guy asked dully. "We would have forgiven her. No one would ever have known about it but me."

"There was something else—she was a drug addict. That was probably the reason

why she didn't want to live. The morphine I had to give her to quiet her would have killed three ordinary men."

And so Guy Evans came to know the terrible fate that had robbed his sister of her dreams, of her ambition, and finally of her life. He placed the full responsibility upon the man whose picture had stood in its silver frame upon the girl's dressing table. As he knelt beside the dead girl, he swore to search until he had learned the identity of that man, and found him, and forced from him the only expiation that could satisfy the honor of a brother.

### XXXI

THE death of Grace had, of course, its naturally depressing effect upon the circle of relatives and friends at Ganado; but her absence of more than a year, the infrequency of her letters, and the fact that they had already come to feel that she was lost to them, mitigated to some degree the keenness of their grief and lessened its outward manifestations. Her pitiful end could not seriously interrupt the tenor of their lives, which had long since grown over the wound of her departure, as a tree's growth rolls over the hurt of a severed limb, leaving only a scar as a reminder of its loss.

Mrs. Evans, Guy, and Custer suffered more than the others—Mrs. Evans because of the natural instincts of motherhood, and Custer from a sense of loss that seemed to have uprooted and torn away a part of his being, even though he realized that his love for Grace had been of a different sort from his hopeless passion for Shannon Burke. It was Guy who suffered most, for hugged to his breast was the gnawing secret of the truth of his sister's life and death. He had told them that Grace had died of pneumonia, and they had not gone behind his assertion to search the records for the truth.

Locked in his desk was the silver frame and the picture of the man whose identity he had been unable to discover. The bungalow had been leased in Grace's name. The Japanese servant had disappeared, and Guy had been unable to obtain any trace of him. The dead girl had had no friends in the neighborhood, and there was no one who could tell him anything that might lead to the discovery of the man he sought.

He did not, however, give up his search. He went often to Hollywood, where he haunted public places and the entrances to studios, in the hope that some day he would

find the man he sought; but as the passing months brought no success, and the duties of his ranch and his literary work demanded more and more of his time, he was gradually compelled to push the furtherance of his vengeance into the background, though without any lessening of his determination to compass it eventually.

To Custer, the direct effect of Grace's death was to revive the habit of drinking more than was good for him—a habit from which he had drifted away during the past year. That it had ever been a habit he would, of course, have been the last to admit. He was one of those men who could drink, or leave it alone. The world is full of them, and so are the cemeteries.

Custer avoided Shannon when he could do so without seeming unfriendly. Quite unreasonably, he felt that his love for Shannon was an indication of disloyalty to Grace. The latter's dismissal of him he had never taken as a serious avowal of her heart. He had realized that the woman who had spoken so bitterly had not been the girl he had loved, and whose avowals of love he had listened to. Nor had she been the girl upon whose sad, tired face he had looked for the last time in the darkened living room of the Evans home, for then death had softened the hard lines of dissipation, revealing again, in chastened melancholy, the soul that sin had disguised but not destroyed.

Shannon recognized the change in Custer. She attributed it to his grief, and to his increased drinking, which she had sensed almost immediately, as love does sense the slightest change in its object, however little apparent to another. She did not realize that he was purposely avoiding her. She was more than ever with Eva now, for Guy, having settled down to the serious occupations of man's estate, no longer had so much leisure to devote to play.

She still occasionally rode at night, for the daytime rides with Custer were less frequent now. Much of his time was occupied closer in around the ranch, with the conditioning of the show herds for the coming fall—an activity which gave him a plausible excuse for foregoing his rides with Shannon. The previous year they had been compelled to cancel their entries because of Custer's imprisonment, since the colonel would not make the circuit of the shows himself, and did not care to trust the herds to any one but his son. Now the

Morgans, the Percherons, the Herefords, and the Berkshires that were to uphold the fame of Ganado were the center of arduous and painstaking fitting and grooming, as the time approached when the finishing touches were to be put upon glossy coat and polished horn and hoof.

May, June, and July had come and gone—it was August again. Guy's futile visits to Los Angeles were now infrequent. The life of Ganado had again assumed the cheerfulness of the past. The heat of summer had brought the swimming pool into renewed demand, and the cool evenings saved the ballroom from desertion. The youth of the foothills and valley, reinforced by week-end visitors from the city, filled the old house with laughter and happiness. Shannon was always of these parties, for they would not let her remain away.

It was upon the occasion of one of them, early in August, that Eva announced the date of her wedding.

"The 2nd of September," she told them. "It comes on a Saturday. We're going to motor to—"

"Hold on!" cautioned Guy. "That's a secret!"

"And when we come back we're going to start building on Hill Thirteen."

"That's a cow pasture," said Custer.

"Well, it won't be one any more. You must find another cow pasture."

"Certainly, little one," replied her brother. "We'll bring the cows up here in the ballroom. With five thousand acres to pick from, you can't find a bungalow site anywhere except in the best dairy cow pasture on Ganado!"

"With five thousand acres to pick from, I suppose you can't find a cow pasture anywhere but on the best bungalow site in southern California! You radiant brother! You wouldn't have your little sister living in the hog pasture, now would you?"

"Heavens, no! Those nine children you aspire to would annoy the brood sows."

"You're hideous!"

"Put on a fox trot, some one," cried Guy. "Dance with your sister, Cus, and you'll let her build bungalows all over Ganado. No one can refuse her anything when they dance with her."

"I'll say they can't," agreed Custer. "Was that how she lured you to your undoing, Guy?"

"What a dapper little idea!" exclaimed Eva.

Guy danced that dance with Mrs. Pennington, and the colonel took out Shannon. As they moved over the smooth floor with the easy dignity that good dancers can impart to the fox trot, the girl's eyes were often on the brother and sister dancing and laughing together.

"How wonderful they are!" she said.

"Who?" inquired the colonel.

"Custer and Eva. Theirs is such a wonderful relationship between brother and sister—the way it ought to be, but very seldom is."

"Oh, I don't know that it's unique," replied the colonel. "Guy and Grace were that way, and so were my father's children. Possibly it's because we were all raised in the country, where children are more dependent upon their sisters and brothers for companionship than children of the city. We all get better acquainted in the country, and we have to learn to find the best that is in each of us, for we haven't the choice of companions here that a city, with its thousands, affords."

"I don't know," said Shannon. "Perhaps that is it; but anyway it is lovely—really lovely, for they are almost like two lovers. At first, when I heard them teasing each other, I used to think there might be some bitterness in their thrusts; but when I came to know you all better, I realized that your affection was so perfect that there could never be any misunderstanding among you."

"That attitude is not peculiar to the Penningtons," replied the colonel. "I know, for instance, of one who so perfectly harmonized with their lives and ideals that in less than a year she became practically one of them."

He was smiling down into Shannon's upturned face.

"I know—you mean me," she said. "It is awfully nice of you, and it makes me very proud to hear you say so, for I have really tried to be like you. If I have succeeded the least bit, I am so happy!"

"I don't know that you have succeeded in being like us," he laughed; "but you have certainly succeeded in being liked by us. Why, do you know, Shannon, I believe Mrs. Pennington and I discuss you and plan for you fully as much as we do the children. It is almost as if you were our other daughter."

The tears came to her eyes.

"I am so happy!" she said again.



It was later in the evening, after a dance, that she and Custer walked out on the driveway along the north side of the ballroom, and stood looking out over the moon-enchanted valley—a vista of loveliness glimpsed between masses of feathery foliage in an opening through the trees on the hillside just below them. They looked out across the acacias and cedars of the lower hill toward the lights of a little village twinkling between two domelike hills at the upper end of the valley. It was an unusually warm evening, almost too warm to dance.

"I think we'd get a little of the ocean breeze," said Custer, "if we were on the other side of the hill. Let's walk over to the water gardens. There is usually a breeze there, but the building cuts us off from it here."

Side by side, in silence, they walked around the front of the building and along the south drive to the steps leading down through the water gardens to the stables. The steps were narrow and Custer went ahead—which is always the custom of men in countries where there are rattlesnakes.

As Shannon stepped from the cement steps to the gravel walk above the first pool, her foot came down upon a round stone, turning her ankle and throwing her against Custer. For support she grasped his arm. Upon such insignificant trifles may the fate of lives depend. It might have been a lizard, a toad, a mouse, or even a rattlesnake that precipitated the moment which, for countless eons, creation had been preparing; but it was none of these. It was just a little round pebble—and it threw Shannon Burke against Custer Pennington, causing her to seize his arm. He felt the contact of those fingers, and the warmth of her body, and her cheek near his shoulder. He threw an arm about her to support her.

Almost instantly she had regained her footing. Laughingly she drew away.

"I stepped on a stone," she said in explanation; "but I didn't hurt my ankle."

But still he kept his arm about her. At first Shannon did not understand, and, supposing that he still thought her unable to stand alone, she again explained that she was unhurt.

He stood looking down into her face, which was turned up to his. The moon, almost full, revealed her features as clearly as sunlight—how beautiful they were, and

how close. She had not yet fully realized the significance of his attitude when he suddenly threw his other arm about her and crushed her to him; and then, before she could prevent, he had bent his lips to hers and kissed her full upon the mouth.

With a startled cry she pushed him away.

"Custer!" she said. "What have you done? This is not like you. I do not understand!"

She was really terrified—terrified at the thought that he might have kissed her without love—terrified that he might have kissed her *with* love. She did not know which would be the greater catastrophe.

"I couldn't help it, Shannon," he said. "Blame the pebble, blame the moonlight, blame me—it won't make any difference. I couldn't help it; that is all there is to it. I've fought against it for months. I knew you didn't love me; but oh, Shannon, I love you!"

He loved her! He had loved her for months! Oh, the horror of it! Her little dream of happiness was shattered. No longer could they go on as they had. There would always be this between them—the knowledge of his love; and he would learn of her love for him, for she would not lie to him if he asked her. Then she would either have to explain or to go away—to explain those hideous months with Crumb. Custer would not believe the truth—no man would believe the truth—that she had come through them undefiled. She herself would not believe it of another woman, and she was too sophisticated to hope that the man who loved her would believe it of her.

He had not let her go. They still stood there—his arms about her.

"Please don't be angry, Shannon," he begged. "You may not want my love, but there's no disgrace in it. Maybe I shouldn't have kissed you, but I couldn't help it, and I'm glad I did. I have that to remember as long as I live. Please don't be angry!"

Angry! She wished to God that he would crush her to him again and kiss her—kiss her—kiss like that now and forever. Why shouldn't he? Why shouldn't she let him? What had she done to deserve eternal punishment? There were countless wives less virtuous than she. Ah, if she could but have the happiness of his love!

She closed her eyes and turned away her head, and for just an instant she dreamed her beautiful dream. Why not? Why not? Why not? There could be no better

wife than she, for there could be no greater love than hers.

He noticed that she no longer drew away. There had been no look of anger in her eyes—only startled questioning; and her face was still so near. Again his arms closed about her, and again his lips found hers.

This time she did not deny him. She was only human—only a woman—and her love, growing steadily in power for many months, had suddenly burst forth in a consuming fire beneath his burning kisses. He felt her lips move in a fluttering sob beneath his, and then her dear arms stole up about his neck and pressed him closer in complete surrender.

"Shannon! You love me?"

"Ah, dear boy, always!"

He drew her to the lower end of a pool, where a rustic seat stood half concealed by the foliage of a drooping umbrella tree. There they sat and asked each other the same questions that lovers have asked since prehistoric man first invented speech, and that lovers will continue to ask so long as speech exists upon earth; very important questions—by far the most important questions in the world.

They did not know how long they had sat there—to them it seemed but a moment—when they heard voices calling their names from above.

"Shannon! Custer! Where are you?"

"I suppose we'll have to go," he said.

"Just one more kiss!"

He took a dozen; and then they rose and walked up the steps to the south drive.

"Shall I tell them?" he asked.

"Not yet, please."

She was not sure that it would last. Such happiness was too sweet to endure.

Eva spied them.

"Where in the world have you two been?" she demanded. "We've been hunting all over for you, and shouting until I'm hoarse."

"We've been right down there by the upper pool, trying to cool off," replied Custer. "It's too beastly hot to dance."

"You never thought so before," said Eva suspiciously. "Do you know, I believe you two have been off spooning! How perfectly gorgeric!"

"How perfectly nothing," replied Custer. "Old people, like Shannon and me, don't spoon. That's for you kids."

Eva came closer.

"Shannon, you'd better go and straighten

your hair before any one else sees you." She laughed and pinched the other's arm. "I'd love it," she whispered in Shannon's ear, "if it were true! You'll tell me, won't you?"

"If it ever comes true, dear"—Shannon returned the whisper—"you shall be the first to know about it."

"Scrumptious! But say, I've got the divinest news—what do you think? Popsy has known it all day and never mentioned it—forgot all about it, he said, until just before he and mother trotted off to bed. Did you ever hear of anything so outrageous? And now half the folks have gone home, and I can't tell 'em. Oh, it's too spiffy for words! I've been longing and longing for it for months and months and months, and now it's going to happen—really going to happen—actually going to happen on Monday!"

"For Heaven's sake, little one, unwind, and get to the end of your harrowing story. What's going to happen?"

"Why, the K. K. S. company is coming on Monday, and Wilson Crumb is coming with them!"

Shannon staggered almost as from the force of a physical blow. Wilson Crumb coming! Coming to Ganado! Short indeed had been her sweet happiness!

"What's the matter, Shannon?" asked Custer solicitously.

The girl steadied herself quickly.

"Oh, it's nothing," she said, with a nervous laugh. "I just felt a little dizzy for a moment."

"You had better go in the house and lie down," he suggested.

"No, I think I'll go home, if you'll drive me down, Custer. You know ten o'clock is pretty late for us."

"It's Saturday night," said Eva.

"But I don't want to miss my ride in the morning. You're all going, aren't you?"

"I am," said Custer.

He noticed that she was very quiet as they drove down to her place, and when they parted she clung to him as if she could not bear to let him go.

It was very wonderful—the miracle of this great love. As he drove back home, he could not think of anything else. He was not egotistical, and it seemed strange that from all the men she must have known Shannon had kept her love for him. With Grace it had been different. Their love had grown up with them from childhood.

It had seemed no more remarkable that Grace should love him than that Eva should love him, or that he should love Grace; but Shannon had come to him out of a strange world—a world full of men—where, with her beauty and her charm, she must have been an object of admiration to many. Yet she had brought her heart to him intact; for she had told him that she had never loved another—and she had told him the truth.

## XXXII

AFTER Custer left her, Shannon entered the bungalow and sat for a long time before the table on which stood a framed photograph of her mother. Never before had she felt the need of loving counsel so sorely as now. In almost any other emergency she could have gone to Mrs. Pennington, but in this she dared not. She knew the pride of the Penningtons. She realized the high altar upon which they placed the purity of their women in the sacred temple of their love, and she knew that none but the pure might enter.

In her heart of hearts she knew that she had the right to stand there beside his mother or his sister; but the pity of it was that she could never prove that right, for who would believe her? Men had been hanged upon circumstantial evidence less damning than that which might be arrayed against her purity. No—if ever they should learn of her association with Wilson Crumb, they would cast her out of their lives as they would put a leper out of their home.

Not even Custer's love could survive such a blow to his honor and his pride. She did not think the less of him because of that, for she was wise enough in the ways of the world to know that pride and virtue are oftentimes uncompromising, even to narrowness.

Her only hope, therefore, lay in avoiding discovery by Wilson Crumb during his stay at Ganado. Her love, and the weakness it had induced, permitted her to accept the happiness from which an unkind fate had hitherto debarred her, and to which even now her honor told her she had no right.

She wished that Custer had not loved her, and that she might have continued to live the life that she had learned to love, where she might be near him, and might constantly see him in the happy consociation of friendship; but with his arms about

her and his kisses on her lips she had not had the strength to deny him, or to dissimulate the great love which had ordered her very existence for many months.

In the brief moments of bliss that had followed the avowal of his love, she had permitted herself to drift without thought of the future; but now that the sudden knowledge of the approaching arrival of Crumb had startled her into recollection of the past and consideration of its bearings upon the future, she realized only too poignantly that the demands of honor required that sooner or later she herself must tell Custer the whole sordid story of those hideous months in Hollywood. There was no other way. She could not mate with a man unless she could match her honor with his. There was no alternative other than to go away forever.

It was midnight before she arose and went to her room. She went deliberately to a drawer which she kept locked, and, finding the key, she opened it. From it she took the little black case, and, turning back the cover, she revealed the phials, the needles, and the tiny syringe that had played so sinister a part in her past.

What she was doing to-night she had done so often in the past year that it had almost assumed the proportions of a rite. It had been her wont to parade her tempters before her, that she might have the satisfaction of deriding them, and of proving the strength of the new will that her love for Custer Pennington had been so potent a factor in developing. To-night she went a little further. She took a bit of cotton, and, placing it in the bowl of a spoon, she dissolved some of the white powder with the aid of a lighted match held beneath the spoon, and then she drew the liquid into the syringe.

Her nerves were overwrought and unstrung from the stress of the conflicting emotions they had endured that evening, and the risk she took was greater than she guessed. And yet, as she looked at the syringe, and realized that its contents held surcease of sorrow, that it held quiet and rest and peace, she felt only repugnance toward it. Not even remotely did she consider the possibility of resorting again to the false happiness of morphine.

She knew now that she was freer from its temptations than one who had never used it; but she felt that after to-night, with the avowal of Pennington's love still in her

ears, she must no longer keep in her possession a thing so diametrically opposed to the cleanliness of his life and his character. For months she had retained it as a part of the system she had conceived for ridding herself of its power. Without it she might never have known whether she could withstand the temptation of its presence; but now she had finished with it. She needed it no longer.

With almost fanatical savagery she destroyed it, crushing the glass phials and the syringe beneath her heel and tearing the little case to shreds. Then, gathering up the fragments, she carried them to the fireplace in the living room and burned them.

On the following day the horses and several loads of properties from the K. K. S. studio arrived at Ganado, and the men who accompanied them pitched their camp well up in Jackknife Cañon. Eva was very much excited, and spent much of her time on horseback, watching their preparations. She tried to get Shannon to accompany her, but the latter found various excuses to remain away, being fearful that even though Crumb had not yet arrived, there might be other employees of the studio who would recognize her.

Crumb and the rest of the company came in the afternoon, although they had not been expected until the following day. Eva, who had made Custer ride up again with her in the afternoon, recalled to the actor-director the occasion upon which she had met him, and they had danced together, some year and a half before.

As soon as he met her, Crumb was struck by her beauty, youth, and freshness. He saw in her a possible means of relieving the tedium of his several weeks' enforced absence from Hollywood—though in the big brother he realized a possible obstacle, unless he were able to carry on his purposed gallantries clandestinely.

In the course of conversation he took occasion to remark that Eva ought to photograph well. "I'll let them take a hundred feet of you," he said, "some day when you're up here while we're working. We might discover an unsung Pickford up here among the hills!"

"She will remain unsung, then," said Custer curtly. "My sister has no desire to go into pictures."

"How do you know I haven't?" asked Eva.

"After Grace?" he asked significantly. She turned to Crumb.

"I'm afraid I wouldn't make much of an actress," she said; "but it would be perfectly radiant to see myself in pictures just once!"

"Good!" he replied. "We'll get you all right some day that you're up here. I promise your brother that I won't try to persuade you into pictures."

"I hope not," said Custer.

As he and Eva rode back toward the house, he turned to the girl.

"I don't like that fellow Crumb," he said.

"Why?" she asked.

"It's hard to say. He just rubs me the wrong way; but I'd bet almost anything that he's a cad."

"Oh, I think he's perfectly divine!" said Eva.

Custer grunted.

"The trouble with you," announced Eva, "is that you're jealous of him because he's an actor. That's just like you men!"

Custer laughed.

"Maybe you're right," he said; "but I don't like him, and I hope you'll never go up there alone."

"Well, I'm going to see them take pictures," replied the girl; "and if I can't get any one to go with me, I'm going alone."

"I don't like the way he looked at you, Eva."

"You're perfectly silly! He didn't look at me any differently than any other man does."

"I don't know about that. I haven't the same keen desire to punch the head of every man I see looking at you as I had in his case."

"Oh, you're prejudiced! I'll bet anything he's just perfectly lovely!"

Next morning, finding no one with the leisure or inclination to ride with her, Eva rode up again to the camp. They had already commenced shooting. Although Crumb was busy, he courteously took the time to explain the scene on which they were working, and many of the technical details of picture making. He had a man hold her horse while she came and squinted through the finder. In fact, he spent so much time with her that he materially delayed the work of the morning. At the same time the infatuation that had had its birth on the preceding day grew to greater proportions in his diseased mind.



He asked her to stay and lunch with them. When she insisted that she must return home, he begged her to come again in the afternoon. Although she would have been glad to do so, for she found the work that they were doing novel and interesting, she declined his invitation, as she already had made arrangements for the afternoon.

He followed her to her horse, and walked beside her down the road a short distance from the others.

"If you can't come this afternoon," he said, "possibly you can come up this evening. We are going to take some night pictures. I hadn't intended inviting any one, because the work is going to be rather difficult and dangerous, and an audience might distract the attention of the actors; but if you think you could get away alone, I should be very glad to have you come up for a few minutes about nine o'clock. We shall be working in the same place. Don't forget," he repeated, as she started to ride away, "that for this particular scene I really ought not to have any audience at all; so if you come, please don't tell any one else about it."

"I'll come," she said. "It's awfully good of you to ask me, and I won't tell a soul."

Crumb smiled as he turned back to his waiting company.

Brought up in the atmosphere that had surrounded her since birth, unacquainted with any but honorable men, and believing as she did that all men are the chivalrous protectors of all women, Eva did not suspect the guile that lay behind the director's courteous manner and fair words. She looked upon the coming nocturnal visit to the scene of their work as nothing more than a harmless adventure; nor was there, from her experience, any cause for apprehension, since the company comprised some forty or fifty men and women who, like any one else, would protect her from any harm that lay in their power to avert.

Her conscience did not trouble her in the least, although she regretted that she could not share her good fortune with the other members of her family, and deplored the necessity of leaving the house surreptitiously, like a thief in the night. Such things did not appeal to Pennington standards; but Eva satisfied these qualms by promising herself that she would tell them all about it at breakfast the next morning.

After lunch that day Custer went to his

room, and, throwing himself on his bed with a book, with the intention of reading for half an hour, fell asleep.

Shortly afterward Shannon Burke, feeling that there would be no danger of meeting any of the K. K. S. people at the Pennington house, rode up on the Senator to keep her appointment with Eva. As she tied her horse upon the north side of the house, Wilson Crumb stopped his car opposite the patio at the south drive. He had come up to see Colonel Pennington for the purpose of arranging for the use of a number of the Ganado Herefords in a scene on the following day.

Not finding Eva in the family sitting room, Shannon passed through the house and out into the patio, just as Wilson Crumb mounted the two steps to the arcade. Before either realized the presence of the other they were face to face, scarce a yard apart.

Shannon went deathly white as she recognized the man beneath his make-up, while Crumb stood speechless for a moment.

"My God, Gaza! You!" he presently managed to exclaim. "What are you doing here? Thank God I have found you at last!"

"Don't!" she begged. "Please don't speak to me. I am living a decent life here."

He laughed in a disagreeable manner.

"Decent!" he scoffed. "Where you getting the snow? Who's putting up for it?"

"I don't use it any more," she said.

"The hell you don't! You can't put that over on me! Some other guy is furnishing it. I know you—you can't get along two hours without it. I'm not going to stand for this. There isn't any guy going to steal my girl!"

"Hush, Wilson!" she cautioned. "For God's sake keep still! Some one might hear you."

"I don't give a damn who hears me. I'm here to tell the world that no one is going to take my girl away from me. I've found you, and you're going back with me, do you understand?"

She came very close to him, her eyes blazing.

"I'm not going back with you, Wilson Crumb," she said. "If you tell, or if you ever threaten me again in any way, I'll kill you. I managed to escape you, and I have found happiness at last, and no one shall take it away from me!"

"What about my happiness? You lived with me two years. I love you, and, by God, I'm going to have you, if I have to—"

A door slammed behind them, and they both turned to see Custer Pennington standing in the arcade outside his door, looking at them.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Did I interrupt?"

"This man is looking for some one, Custer," said Shannon, and turned to reënter the house.

Confronted by a man, Crumb's bravado had vanished. Intuitively he guessed that he was looking at the man who had stolen Gaza from him; but he was a very big young man, with broad shoulders and muscles that his flannel shirt and riding breeches did not conceal. Crumb decided that if he was going to have trouble with this man, it would be safer to commence hostilities at a time when the other was not looking.

"Yes," he said. "I was looking for your father, Mr. Pennington."

"Father is not here. He has driven over to the village. What do you want?"

"I wanted to see if I could arrange for the use of some of your Herefords to-morrow morning."

Pennington was leading the way toward Crumb's car.

"You can find out about that," he said, "or anything else that you may wish to know, from the assistant foreman, whom you will usually find up at the other end, around the cabin. If he is in doubt about anything, he will consult with us personally; so that it will not be necessary, Mr. Crumb, for you to go to the trouble of coming to the house again."

Custer's voice was level and low. It carried no suggestion of anger, yet there was that about it which convinced Crumb that he was fortunate in not having been kicked off the hill physically rather than verbally—for kicked off he had been, and advised to stay off, into the bargain.

He wondered how much Pennington had overheard of his conversation with Gaza. Shannon Burke, crouching in a big chair in the sitting room, was wondering the same thing.

As a matter of fact, Custer had overheard practically all of the conversation. The noise of Crumb's car had awakened him, but almost immediately he had fallen into a doze, through which the spoken

words impinged upon his consciousness without any actual, immediate realization of their meaning, of the identity of the speakers. The moment that he became fully awake, and found that he was listening to a conversation not intended for his ears, he had risen and gone into the patio.

When finally he came into the sitting room, where Shannon was, he made no mention of the occurrence, except to say that the visitor had wanted to see his father. It did not seem possible to Shannon that he could have failed to overhear at least a part of their conversation, for they were standing not more than a couple of yards from the open window of his bedroom, and there was no other sound breaking the stillness of the August noon. She was sure that he had heard, and yet his manner indicated that he had not.

She waited a moment to see if he would be the first to broach the subject, but he did not. She determined to tell him then and there all that she had to tell, freeing her soul and her conscience of their burden, whatever the cost might be.

She rose and came to where he was standing, and, placing a hand upon his arm, looked up into his eyes.

"Custer," she said, "I have something to tell you. I ought to have told you before, but I have been afraid. Since last night there is no alternative but to tell you."

"You do not have to tell me anything that you do not want to tell me," he said. "My confidence in you is implicit. I could not both love and distrust at the same time."

"I must tell you," she said. "I only hope—"

"Where in the world have you been, Shannon?" cried Eva, breaking suddenly into the sitting room. "I have been away down to your place looking for you. I thought you were going to play golf with me this afternoon."

"That's what I came up for," said Shannon, turning toward her.

"Well, come on, then! We'll have to hurry, if we're going to play eighteen holes this afternoon."

Custer Pennington went to his room again after the girls had driven off in the direction of the Country Club. He wondered what it had been that Shannon wished to tell him. Round and round in his mind rang the words of Wilson Crumb:

"You lived with me two years—you lived with me two years—you lived with me two years!"

She had been going to explain that, he was sure; but she did not have to explain it. The girl that he loved could have done no wrong. He trusted her. He was sure of her.

But what place had that soft-faced cad had in her life? It was unthinkable that she had ever known him, much less that they had been upon intimate terms.

Custer went to his closet and rummaged around for a bottle. It had been more than two weeks since he had taken a drink. The return to his old intimacy with Shannon, and the frequency with which he now saw her had again weaned him from his habit; but to-day he felt the need of a drink—of a big drink, stiff and neat.

He swallowed the raw liquor as if it had been so much water. He wished now that he had punched Crumb's head when he had had the chance. The cur! He had spoken

to Shannon as if she were a common woman of the streets—Shannon Burke—Custer's Shannon!

Feeling no reaction to the first drink, he took another.

"I'd like to get my fingers on his throat!" he thought. "Before I choked the life out of him, I'd drag him up here and make him kiss the ground at her feet!"

But no, he could not do that. Others would see it, and there would have to be explanations; and how could he explain it without casting reflections on Shannon?

For hours he sat there in his room, nursing his anger, his jealousy, and his grief; and all the time he drank and drank again. He went to his closet, got his belt and holster, and from his dresser drawer took a big, ugly-looking forty-five—a Colt's automatic. For a moment he stood holding it in his hand, looking at it. Almost caressingly he handled it, and then he slipped it into the holster at his hip, put on his hat, and started for the door.

*(To be concluded in the November number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

## ISLANDS

A LONELY island is each human soul,  
Cut off by seas, misunderstanding seas,  
From all the other lonely island souls,  
And how each fares the others never know.

Upon each island shore the storms beat hard;  
Corroding waters eat away its sands,  
And wild winds waste among its lovely flowers.  
Each island meets the storms as best it may,  
And each to every tempest pays its toll,  
Though what, the other islands never know!

Now and again upon an island shore  
A signal beacon burns, but what it means  
The other islands do not know or guess.  
Is it perhaps a signal of distress,  
Or is it meant to signify "All's well"?  
The mists are thick, dividing seas are wide,  
And all unread the signal beacon dies—  
And leaves the other islands in the dark!

They strive sometimes to shout from shore to shore;  
But it is hard to hear above the noise  
Of pounding seas that roar so loud between—  
The voices die away upon the winds!  
A word comes now and then across the waste  
Between; but most of what the islands shout  
From shore across to shore is not the truth.  
A lonely island is each human soul!

*Roselle Mercier Montgomery*

# Page Tim O'Brien

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—THE STORY OF MR. TIM, THE HONEST THIEF, AND MARY DUFFY, THE DOORSTEP KID

By John A. Moroso

Author of "Alias Santa Claus," "The People Against Nancy Preston," etc.

MARY was called Duffy because that was the name of the cop who brought her to the orphan asylum. She was in a basket—a doorstep kid.

She grew fast, and learned to button herself up the back—an accomplishment to be acquired only by the utterly self-dependent of her sex. By that time she had achieved a passion for food that caused great unrest in the institution, which was always just over its budget. Along with the appetite, Mary had an abundance of very soft, smoky hair, small, even teeth of alabaster whiteness, sloping cheeks that were like lilies dipped in wine, and eyes of that heavenly blue to be found in the petals of the belladonna larkspur. Her full lips drooped at the corners, and her neck was thin and lightly veined.

Of course, Mary Duffy received an education up to a certain point.

"What is a preterit?" she was asked.

"An insect," was her reply.

Pretty as she was, they were glad to turn her over to a blond woman who came applying for a girl to help with the baby. The lady gave the name of Mrs. Cornelia O'Brien. Her husband was Timothy O'Brien. Their home was in Morton Street, in the lower West Side of New York.

The O'Briens were not unkind to Mary. In addition to letting her do the cooking, washing, and house cleaning, they gave her entire possession of a howling, laughing, tottering, stumbling, clutching, hardy youngster with a four-alarm head of hair, which blazed the path of his future life to a choice between the fire and police departments. He was Mary's great joy, and she accepted him as wages in lieu of the constantly postponed fifteen dollars a month that Mrs. O'Brien promised to pay her.

Mr. O'Brien was another of her delights. He was a lithe man of thirty, who generally wore a dark blue flannel shirt. He was full of fun, and delighted to upset all rules and regulations—Mary had had her fill of those—eating his supper at five o'clock in the morning and his breakfast as night fell, and getting his dinner somewhere away from the flat.

When the stars came, he was gone. His wife would then take the curl papers from her yellow hair, adorn herself, and let Mary carry off her little charge to the movies, while Mrs. O'Brien entertained her friends. Infants in arms are permitted at the ten-cent houses on Eighth and Ninth Avenues. In the old Ninth Ward, where they lived, there is still a fine old-time attention given to the matter of having babies. The mothers know that it is a blessing to have the man at the organ lull their little ones to deeper slumber on a hot night, while, as the electric fans whir, they may sit and behold the beauties of the great outer world, with its palaces and mansions, its heroes and heroines, its running rivers, placid lakes, and broad fields, with ever true love triumphant.

So Mary Duffy, with tiny Red O'Brien snug upon her half-formed breasts, sat night after night in the Orpheum, and for the two jitneys placed in her work-scarred hands by her mistress, learned the manners of the great world without its speech. She learned how to carry herself with grace, how to assume hauteur or to be nobly condescending, how to be scornful or politely vivacious—learned to be a silent lady, in fact.

Next to the proud and rich of her sex on the screen, she loved the outcast. When Pauline Frederick's large, accusing eyes



would fill with tears as she clasped the babe to her bosom, Mary Duffy's eyes would also fill, and Red would emit a shriek at her clutch.

"My child!" she would whisper to her charge. "Mother's here!"

And sympathetic eyes would glisten about her in the semidarkness.

Home again, with the boss still away, and the flat very smelly of tobacco and things, there would be the high laughter of women and the rumble of men's voices. Occasionally there would be a mild rough-house and complaints from the neighbors.

One morning, about four o'clock, O'Brien came in with his right arm hanging limp. He was a man who did not waste words. To awaken the woman, he merely yanked her with his good arm from her bed.

Mary heard the thud, and got up. She heard him say to the dazed female:

"Get this in your nut, quick—the bulls are coming. I'm winged, but it ain't bad. There's enough stuff in this house to send you up for ten years!"

Mary didn't understand further than that there was trouble coming.

"You want me, Mr. Tim?" she asked, standing in the bedroom door, her feet bare, her beautiful hair flowing about her little chicken-bone shoulders.

"Help her get dressed," he ordered. "We're going away."

In ten minutes the O'Briens were ready for flight. A squawk from Red, who slept with Mary, and who had awakened to grope in vain for her, reminded Tim of his offspring. Mrs. O'Brien paid no heed to the question raised by the child's voice.

"Gee, the kid!" said O'Brien. "Look here, Mary—we got to beat it. Take care of him for me." He pulled a roll of money from a pocket and handed it to her. "Listen! Always live on a street that's numbered. If anything happens, put an ad in the paper with the number of the house you live in first and the number of the street right after it—all the numbers run together—then the name of the town, and sign it 'Mary.' Remember that, now. Say it over."

She repeated the directions.

"I'll find out whether it's east or west. Put it in the personal column of the paper we always read. Good-by! A little speed there, Agnes, if you don't want to make brooms for ten years. Good-by, Mary. Gimme that kid!"

Mary brought the boy, and Tim kissed him. Then he put an arm about her shoulders and kissed her.

"Remember now, Mary," he said; "if anything goes wrong with you, just page Tim O'Brien."

The next moment they were gone.

## II

O'BRIEN pushed the blond woman through the back door of the tenement house and through the yard, and boosted her over the fence, into a space packed with trucks and peddlers' wagons. He threaded the clutter of parked vehicles easily, but not so the dragging and panting Agnes. At his hoarse and somewhat profane request, she was tearing the curl papers from her flaxen locks as she followed him; and by the time they reached the open street she had accumulated enough axle grease to have slicked the ways for the launching of a new dreadnought.

They turned to the left, for in the other direction was Hudson Street, well lighted, and one of the widest highways of the city. In the direction they chose was a tangle of thoroughfares, narrow and dark.

In one of these—Jones Street, in fact—he paused to gather from the gutter a handful of refuse and sweepings, with which he smeared the sleeve of his injured left arm, hiding the blood from the flesh wound. To the ordinary person, Agnes might have looked frowzy enough; but O'Brien did not seem satisfied with the extent of her disarray, for he smeared her waist and skirts, and, for good measure, dabbed one of her cheeks, all the while keeping his ears tuned and his eyes open for his pursuers.

In and out of the shadows they darted until they came in sight of the two green lights of the Mercer Street station—a station which is sometimes called the cops' Blackwell's Island, for it is a lonesome precinct in the heart of the silk and woolen district, with not even a lunch room open after eight o'clock in the evening. The uniformed doorman of the station was taking the air on the front step, smoking his pipe, and cursing past errors that had brought about his transfer to this beastly neighborhood from one that was lighted and gay.

"Say!" whispered O'Brien fiercely. "We're going to spend a couple o' weeks with the City of New York for being drunk and disorderly. About the last place the dicks will look for us will be in a cell—get

me? If they put us on the island for thirty days, all very well. Then these clubbers can run around and use up shoe leather until Enright gets sore and sends 'em out to the pampas. You got a beating coming to you, anyhow, having Mickey Dooley at the flat every night, while I was out working like a dog to support the family, wearing out expensive jimmies and electric drills!"

"Where d'yuh get that Mickey stuff?" Agnes asked faintly. Fear of him was in her heart. "Honest, I ain't done a thing wrong with him. Ask Mary." She cowered against the front of an old-fashioned brick building long given over to sweat-shops. "Don't hit me, Tim!"

What little anger had risen in him disappeared. For a fraction of a second a grin crept across his face.

"You don't get me," he told her quickly. "I said we were going to spend a couple o' weeks in the coop, so these cops and bulls can rush themselves to death looking for us. They'll look everywhere and telegraph everywhere, but they won't look on the island for us, or in a police station, will they? We're going to have a street fight right here, and we'll get arrested for disturbing the peace. One little tap on your beak, and you'll have a little spell of the old nosebleed again. Then begin to yell, and we'll fool 'em!"

Before the woman could answer, he had smacked her nose lightly, and the blood was flowing. She yelled, and Tim, with many a pretended drunken shout, grappled with her. The narrow, dark street stirred its slumbering echoes to the job. The doorman dropped his pipe, and, with a shout to the desk sergeant within, rushed the two of them. In a few minutes they were safe in their cells, amply and paradoxically protected from the police by the police.

Tim O'Brien slept peacefully as Mary Duffy and little Red blinked at the detectives engaged in searching his flat for loot.

### III

"WHOSE kid's that?" demanded the inspector in charge of the Central office, when Mary was brought in with the O'Brien infant on her right arm.

"Mine."

The inspector's broad red face broke into a grin of incredulity.

"Where'd you get it?"

"I am his mother."

Tim's money was wrapped about her slender legs, so that no bulge showed. The bills, red, yellow, and green, under thin flesh-colored lisle, made her stockings appear to be of changeable silk. She was not at all afraid, and she smiled proudly as she unwrapped the shawl from the bundle of humanity and displayed the contents.

"Ain't he grand?" she asked.

"Where's his father?"

"He deserted us."

"Married?"

Now was the time for the Pauline Fredrick stuff, and Mary gave it to the inspector. Her great blue eyes widened and filled with tears. She pressed Red to her bosom and turned from her inquisitor with a sob.

"Why, you ain't twenty yet!"

"I'm just twenty. My child was born when I was not quite nineteen."

"Hell!" the inspector muttered. "You can't tell a schoolgirl from her grandmother these days!"

Mary had fooled him. An unmarried girl with a baby, a mother hardly out of childhood herself, is no uncommon catch in the night hauls of the police net. Such cases keep the officers of the Children's Society running here and there about the town, trying to help out, when all other sources of help have been used up.

Mary told him that she did the housework for the O'Briens, and was well paid for it. She knew nothing about them. She had saved some money, and could get along and find another place.

Nothing would be accomplished by locking her up.

"Get out, and good luck to you, Miss Honey," said the inspector, who had girls of his own.

The day was beginning when she left police headquarters and cut across town through Bleecker Street to Morton, a short distance. The sky, unflecked by a cloud, undimmed by mist, was neither gold nor silver, but of that soft radiance which one may see in the hair of a blond child. The deep blue of the dawn had vanished, but the sun had not yet come over the distant plains of Brooklyn's tenements.

The first workers of the day were shuffling sleepily along the streets—men and women with streaky features, cooks, waiters, dish washers for the thousands of cheap restaurants; firemen and elevator operators in the high buildings of business; shop-

keepers out for the early trade of the host that would shortly swarm into the town by ferry and tube from the suburbs.

Had it been snowing, Mary could have pretended that she had been cast out into the street by cruel and unforgiving parents; but the last snow of winter had gone its way to the embracing rivers of the little island of wealth and poverty and great quantities of melodrama. Still, true to form and her cinema education, she hurried with wholly unnecessary furtiveness to the flat and surveyed the wreckage made by Mr. Tim's pursuers.

"Now, ain't the place a ruin?" she asked herself aloud. "We got to get away from here."

Suddenly the sun flooded the kitchen window, and in a silvery soprano, high, thin as a cambric needle, but sweet withal, Mary sang "Kiss Me Again" as she prepared little Red's bottle.

The baby fed and tucked in bed, she rattled down the kitchen range. Then, in the gradually increasing warmth of the tiny hall corner of what had once been a fine residence—back in the forties and fifties, long before burglary had become established as a common profession—she sat and thought of Mr. Tim. She recalled the fun in him; his dark face, his laughing eyes when he played with the baby; the terror of his frown, and the storminess of it when the blond woman rasped him; his odd ways of eating supper just before breakfast; his fine square shoulders and trimness of build and his strength. Once he had picked her up and tossed her to his shoulder, and had kissed her, after doing the same for the four-alarm kid.

"Oh, Lord," she sighed, "I'll miss him something fierce!"

Mary Duffy had crawled into bed with the beloved embryo city employee, and was gently breathing away a catch-up on the lost hours of the night, when Tim O'Brien and the blond woman were filed before a magistrate in the Jefferson Market police court. The line of prisoners edged along between the court prison and a little stand sometimes called "the dock," just before the desk of the rather fat but not unkindly gentleman paid to dispense justice to minor malefactors.

"What's the matter with his eyes?" asked the magistrate, giving Tim a glance. "What's he charged with?"

"Drunk and fighting in the streets," replied a cop from the Mercer Street station. "He could see all right last night, but not a thing can he see to-day, yeronner."

"Wood alcohol?" The magistrate suddenly thrust out his pen toward an eye of the prisoner, but not even a wink did he get in return. "Bellevue Hospital!" he ordered.

The blond woman followed, the paint in streaks on her face, beside gullies of caked blood from the smack on the bugle delivered by the hard-handed O'Brien.

"Drunk and fighting," said the cop.

"Ten or thirty," breathed the magistrate passionlessly.

"Here's me ten," mumbled the blond woman, reaching between her right hip and her shoe.

"And costs, two forty," droned the clerk.

"Here's fifteen—gimme the change."

She swept the two dollars and sixty cents into a dirty paw, and, with no inquiry as to the blind O'Brien, heaved through the crowd of anxious friends and curious idlers filling the court room.

Morton Street was not far away, but she did not head in that direction. Under her rumbled the tube to Jersey City, paradise of the hunted because of its railroad terminals, its cheap Jack shops, and its questionable taverns. There she easily found refuge. Before evening she had acquired new clothes, presentable baggage, a new shade of hair, a new sparkle in her eyes, and new color on her cheeks. At ten o'clock she rolled over in her berth on the West Shore train, Chicago bound, with the pleasing imprecation:

"To hell with O'Brien!"

#### IV

MARY counted her money when she got up. It amounted to three hundred and twenty dollars—a fortune!

It was the last week of April, filled with sunshine and rain. No blond woman—no worries—just Red and herself and the movies. It was glorious!

She had never heard the infant called by any other name than "kid" or "Red." She would have to christen it. Of course, she knew its sex, and so there was no danger of her naming the child Mary Pickford O'Brien, or anything like that—as lots of children name kittens Jimmy or Patsy, and later have them grow up to be grandmothers.

During a week of happiness—three times a day at the movies, and charlotte russe for breakfast every morning—a week tinged with sadness only in the evenings, when she missed the gayety of Mr. Tim—she studied the names of the characters flashed on the magic silver sheet. Finally she picked out "Monsieur le Duc de Picard," from a thrilling plagiarism of a Sardou story. She named him all of that, as a prefix to O'Brien.

It was, to her dear, sweet, innocent mind, an arresting cognomen. If Red had been grown up, and ignorant enough to sign "Monsieur le Duc de Picard O'Brien" in a hotel register, he, too, would probably have found it arresting. The house detective would have attended to that.

It was a mouthful for a hippopotamus, and Mary soon grew weary of trying to rid herself of it when she wanted to give him an extra amount of loving—which was on an average of thirty minutes to the hour; so she would call him "Mounseer," or "Picky," or "the Duck."

Mrs. Harrigan, who lived on the floor below, and whose man was above the ordinary, being a stationary engineer when he had a job, got tired of hearing Mary blow off such a name whenever she presented the kid to one of her friends.

"Raise him like a human bein'," she protested, "or keep him away from here. He ain't no frog. He's an O'Brien. If he was mine, I'd call him 'the Wad,' or 'the Bundle,' or 'Pieface,' or 'Honey Bunch,' or 'Old Bum'!"

Mary decided that Mrs. Harrigan was coarse and common; but she had learned the principle of *noblesse oblige* from the movies, so she tucked away the mouthful name for possible state occasions or police inquiries, and went back to calling her lusty and beloved charge "Red." She consoled herself with the thought that Mr. Tim called him that. Although she had an idea that Mr. Tim was "in trouble with the police," as the poor so humanely phrase legal indiscretions, she was sure that "Red" was a sweet name for having passed his thin lips.

She had not forgotten the prayers taught her in the orphan asylum; but she was out in the world now, and was growing up, and had seen the movies, and her petitions would be involved with new experiences. She had lied to the police inspector at headquarters, for instance. She wasn't seven-

teen yet, and she had fooled him into believing her twenty, and a mother at that—which was a deception, and wrong. Of course it was wrong, but it had been so exhilarating and exciting that she quite forgot to send aloft her little petition for forgiveness on that score.

But on the night when she decided to end the days of charlotte russe and movies, and go out after a job the next morning early, she knelt down, clasped her hands, and prayed:

"Dear Lord, please take care of the baby, and me, and Mr. Tim!"

## V

WHILE her beloved Mr. Tim groped about the corridors of Bellevue, Mary and Red searched a morning newspaper for a situation that would be pleasant, profitable, not far from a movie house, and on a numbered street. There was nothing to her liking, and so she bought another paper—the kind of journal that respectable people with automobiles read, but without any "funnies."

This advertisement caught her eye:

MINISTER needs companion for ill wife; must be bright, young, and cheerful; good home and fair wages. X. Y. Z., Times.

Mary admitted that she was bright, young, and cheerful. She dressed with great care. Mr. Tim had always insisted on her having pretty clothes, and the detectives had not taken her belongings. Red was polished until he shone, and off they marched for the subway and the Times Building.

The young man at the "Help Wanted" window looked up from his job and beheld what he thought to be a little princess. Mary smiled back at him and lightly touched a pretty bonnet, trimmed with forget-me-nots and tiny pink silk rosebuds.

"Yes, madam?"

Gee, nobody had ever called her "madam"! It took her breath away. Perhaps the young man thought she was a swell.

Mary's movie training came to her assistance. She half lowered her eyelids and said:

"X. Y. Z., if you please."

In her ignorance of newspaper business matters, she thought that Mr. X. Y. Z. himself would be there.

"They're all made up ready to mail, according to instructions," said the clerk.



handing her a bulky envelope addressed to the Rev. Dr. Ashmead Horton, Park Avenue.

Other patrons of the paper crowded her aside before she could ask as to its contents. In the elevator hall she opened the envelope and discovered a dozen letters addressed to "X. Y. Z., Times." One of these she opened and found to be from a lady eager to get the job. She was out on Broadway before she realized that the clerk must have thought her a member of the Rev. Dr. Horton's household, calling for the replies to the advertisement. He must have been a new clerk; or perhaps Mary's azure eyes, smoky hair, and pretty bonnet had made him dizzy.

Well, the only thing to do was to take the replies to the minister—which she did, a policeman directing her. The address was a skyscraper. She had expected an apartment house or a residence. A man in uniform told her that Dr. Horton was in Room 19, on the twentieth floor, and up she was shot, with Red wildly waving his arms in delight over this new method of ascent.

On the door of Room 19 Mary read:

KEEP SMILING  
Come in—Glad to See You  
OFFICES OF  
THE SUNSHINE WEEKLY  
A. Horton, Ed.

Mary was a bit puzzled by the seeming fact that Mr. Horton put one of his first names at the end; but when she confronted a pimply-faced office boy within, she promptly asked for the whole business.

"I'd like to see Mr. A. Horton, Ed, X. Y. Z.," she said.

"And D.D., LL.D.?" added the youth with a grin.

"Yes."

Mary was taking the whole order.

"Who is it, Sammy?" came in a mild voice from behind a desk piled almost to the ceiling with newspapers.

"A girl and a kid," replied the lad.

"Here they are."

The Rev. Dr. Horton poked a lean face under a great shock of white hair around the edge of his barricade. Mary and Red saw two misty blue eyes staring delightedly at her over the rims of silver spectacles. She returned his smile.

"I am Dr. Horton," said the editor of the *Sunshine Weekly*. "Where did you

two young people drop from? Did the first little breeze of the springtime blow you in through some open window?"

"No, sir," replied Mary. "We come up in the cage to give you these letters. I was to the *Times* office, asking about the job, and the young man handed me this."

She extended the envelope, the contents of which he glanced over carelessly, his ascetic countenance lighted with smiles. Finally he laughed, and called to the pimply office boy to draw up a chair.

"You expected me to be at the *Times* office?" he asked.

"Yes, sir—that's what the want ad said."

"But I see you already have a place."

He waved a hand to Red. Red waved back furiously with both chubby fists, and shouted:

"Glub! Glub!"

"No, sir," Mary snuggled the infant on her shoulder. "That is, mister, I don't get paid for it."

"Perhaps, then, the child is your little brother or sister?"

"No, sir. He's just Red." She hesitated between telling him the truth and telling him the lie which the inspector had swallowed so easily.

"Red, I am delighted to meet you, old son," chuckled the ministerial editor, giving her time.

"I was hired to take care of him," she finally explained, her feet leaving the primrose path of romance for once, at any rate; "but the people who owned him went away suddenly."

"Abandoned the baby?"

"No, sir. They gave him to me."

"Oh!" Dr. Horton pondered this and asked: "And to whom do *you* belong, my dear?"

"Nobody."

"Have you no parents?"

"Not a one. I come out of the orphan asylum."

She wanted to register sorrow and shame over this admission, but Dr. Horton was chuckling so cheerfully that she knew her effort might result in heavy frost. She gave him the name of the orphan asylum, which he jotted on a note pad.

"And *your* name?" he asked.

"Mary Duffy."

"And the baby's?"

"He's Mounseer le Duck de Pickard O'Brien."

"Wh-a-a-t?"

Dr. Horton ran his thin, heavily veined fingers through his snowy hair and broke into a roar of laughter.

"That's his name—I gave it to him," she explained.

"You did? You haven't any grudge against him?"

"I love him more than all the world. He's just like being my own baby."

An avalanche of dusty papers suddenly descended from the top of the desk, started, perhaps, by the merriment of the editor of the *Sunshine Weekly*.

"Boy!" he shouted. "Dig me out again!"

The boy rushed to the rescue.

Still holding the child to her breast, Mary helped to dust off the editor. He looked up to her gratefully. In the sunlight streaming through his desk window she was fair and sweet to behold. The baby's red hair lay against her left shoulder like a flower, and a little hand reached toward her neck.

"You hold that youngster as if he was really yours," he said.

"He's mine, all right," she replied. "All the money and jewels and sport clothes couldn't buy him!"

Her eyes fairly sparkled with pride in her possession.

"Mary Duffy," Dr. Horton said solemnly, "the world needs a lot of girls like you. You're just naturally a mother. If I was President of the United States, I'd put you on a golden throne in the White House, holding that baby just the way you are holding him now. Then I'd have big receptions for women only, and let them look at you and Red. I'd have special days for these silly flappers. God love you, child! God love you!"

"Thank you, sir," said Mary.

"Now then, Mary and Red," continued Dr. Horton, groping for the telephone, "if you will just wait a moment, I shall talk with the orphan asylum people."

"But don't tell them about Mr. O'Brien leaving us. He's grand!"

The asylum officials verified her story.

"I'll give you and the baby the job," Dr. Horton announced. "We live in the country, at Skydale—a good name for a preacher's town, isn't it? My wife is low in spirits, and needs cheering up. We have only one child, a son, and he's a man now. What we need is young people around us."

"What street do you live on?" asked Mary, a bit anxiously.

"Why, on Fourth Street," he replied, puzzled. "Oh, perhaps you think I'm going to send you out there to find the house yourself. Not a bit of it! I have a flivver, and we'll go by your place and get your trunk. Then we cross the ferry, and along the edge of the Palisades we roll in great style, and are home in an hour. How does that suit you?"

"Great!" said Mary. "I'm ready."

"Boy!" shouted Dr. Horton. "Put up the sign. We'll have a day off."

The boy, who had been attending to his pimples with the aid of a small round pocket mirror, jumped up as if a spring had been released under him, picked up a sign reading, "Back in a little while," and hung it on the door.

While the minister was hunting for his hat and coat, he observed to Mary, a touch of gravity in his mild voice and a little cloud momentarily in his glance:

"A day or two days, a year or a lifetime—it's all just a little while to those who are happy!"

## VI

IN Bellevue's alcoholic ward Tim was ticketed as another of the hooch victims. An interne occasionally gave him an injection of physostigmine, a drug which relieves the pain of photophobia. The patient made no protest.

"What people don't know won't hurt 'em," was one of Tim's guides to safety.

As he had neglected to tell Mary that he was one of the strangely afflicted humans whose sight is lost in the sunlight, but is regained with the night, he took the interne's treatment without a word either of protest or of information as to the real nature of his affliction.

He had not been sent as a prisoner to the hospital, but had been sent for treatment. The drunk and disorderly charge had been dropped. He was free to go when he could make his own way, or when some friend came to lead him to a haven.

At the end of three weeks, Timothy hopped from his bed and walked the length of the ward without stumbling into anything. He showed himself to the night attendants and declared that his vision was restored, at the same time asking that he might be allowed to go away from there.

An interne was called. The patient dem-

onstrated his ability to take care of himself, received his clothes and his money, and was discharged.

"Better leave the hooch alone," he was advised.

"None of that stuff for me!" he replied with a smile.

The night was calling him, the shadows he loved so well, and as he left the great cluster of ancient buildings the breeze from the East River brought to his cheek the caress of spring.

At Second Avenue he bought a copy of his favorite chronicle of crime, and, using a magnifying glass, looked for news of Mary and Red. There was none.

There was also Agnes, the blond woman, to think of. She had played him two dirty tricks—taking on Mickey Dooley as an admirer, and leaving him in the lurch in the police court. Of course he had expected her to make the best of her way until things quieted down; but if she had had a trace of affection for him she would not have cleared out without even a word or a look, leaving him standing there before the magistrate, blind as a bat.

Tim's thoughts were far from pleasant as he rode north in a Third Avenue elevated train. Agnes was a bad one, always had been a bad one; older than he was, too, and fooling him because he was just a kid. Anyhow, she had done one big thing for him. She had given him Red, although only the Lord knew how much she hated the idea of motherhood.

"If she beats it for keeps," he told himself, "I'm done with the burglary line. I'll get a job when things brighten up, find Mary and Red, and knuckle down to the straight and narrow!"

He found lots of excuses for his past transgressions against the law. Agnes had nagged him to death for money, clothes, amusement; and when the baby came she had a powerful lever with which to dislodge him from honesty to crookedness. Then, too, his affliction—seeing only in the night time, like a bat or an owl or some predatory beast of the jungle.

He was going clear to the end of the elevated line and beyond—to a little cigar store where there might be a letter from his woman or from one of his pals. He had plenty of time in which to seek palliating circumstances for being a crook.

"Who the hell ever heard of a human being born as I was?" he demanded of the

flying wall of tenement houses, as he stared out the car window.

But there were such people. Lots of eye specialists of the New York hospitals had examined him and studied him. They had showed him in clinics, in his boyhood, but none of them could do anything for him. He was a human bat. He had to work in the night. When the sun shone, he couldn't see his hand before his face.

His thoughts turned again to Mary Duffy. He remembered the time when he had thrown her up in the air and kissed her, after having given the beloved Red the same treatment. Ah, there was a girl worth while, sweet as a little flower, and as innocent! She wouldn't pester him for money and more money, or dye her hair yellow and smoke and drink with anybody and everybody. And she was a natural mother. The way she loved that kid had tickled him almost to death.

His thin lips broke into a smile. He'd do anything for Mary and his little fellow!

"Last stop—all out!"

Tim hurried from the train and the station, and made his way north through sparsely and raggedly built streets. As he passed Father Kennedy's little church, with its gilt cross over the door, he lifted his cap. The good old priest had christened Tim and prepared him for confirmation; but O'Brien had not seen him in three years now.

Around the corner he found the little cigar store where the proprietor accepted mail for anybody for a small sum per month, never asking a question. For a dollar a month extra he would forward letters to any part of the world. Some letters of his clients would travel far and make many stops before reaching the person they were intended for. Even then, if they were caught up by detectives and opened, they would perhaps show only a few numbers and a scant part of the alphabet.

"Hello, Tony! Any mail for me?" asked Tim.

Tony, better known to his more intimate friends as the Dummy, because of his reticence, reached under his counter and drew forth a letter.

"Been here a week," he said. "You no come; you no write."

"In the hospital."

The Italian, a man well advanced in years, white of hair and mustache, watched Tim through half closed eyes.

The letter was not from Agnes, though

it was addressed in a woman's handwriting. Tim opened it and held it up to an overhead gas jet, his magnifying glass over it. The letter was signed "Fanny." It was from his wife's sister.

DEAR TIM:

We was all out on a ride the other night when the masheen skided and turned over. Nobody was hurt only Agnes. Her head was smashed. She died in the hospital this morning. Send me her things, if there is any.

FANNY.

"What's the mat'?" asked Tony, as Tim stood staring at the letter. "Somebody in trouble?"

"She's dead."

"Who?"

"My wife."

"Huh!"

The knob of the door to the street turned. With the click of the catch Tim crumpled the letter in his hand and wheeled.

"Git 'em up, O'Brien!"

It was Foley, of the Bronx Detective Bureau. Tim's hands went above his head, the letter dropping to the floor.

"I ain't got a gun," protested Tim. "I'm on the level."

"Git around here and pick up that piece of paper," Foley ordered the Italian. "Now turn around, O'Brien, and keep your hands up."

The detective felt Tim's pockets, and, being assured that his prisoner was not armed, permitted him to lower his hands.

"What's this?" he demanded.

"A letter from my sister-in-law in Chicago. Read it."

"Who's Agnes?"

"My wife. She's dead."

"Maybe so, and then again maybe not," smiled Foley. "You crooks spring a new one every day on us bulls."

"It's straight."

"It can't be, with you holding it in your hand. If you picked up a crowbar, it would turn into a corkscrew, O'Brien."

Tim's face went black as the detective reached in a pocket for a pair of handcuffs. One spring, and Foley was on his back on the floor, the gun whizzing through the little show window. In a second Tim was out in the street and running like a deer.

## VII

UNFORTUNATELY for Tim, the trailing Foley had not come on this job alone. He and his side-kick, Bezatti, were prowling

the Bronx wilds when they spotted him leaving the elevated railroad station.

"That's O'Brien," whispered Foley; "and I'll bet he's on a job. Listen! I'll trail him. You telephone the boss and get him to send a man to watch this station, another to the subway, and then hop to Tony's tobacco shop. I think he'll be going there first. If he does, we'll get something on him that might connect him up with his last job. If he goes in Tony's, I'll make a quick collar."

Bezatti was a quick worker, and the telephone message was sent before Tim had received his letter telling of the death of Agnes. He was within a block of the Italian tobacconist's when he heard the crash of glass and saw the glint of steel flying into the street. He also saw O'Brien dart from the place.

"Blau! Blau!"

Two bullets whizzed by Tim's flying heels, the reports making an uproar in the deserted streets and bringing a half dozen uniformed men on the run from as many directions, all blowing their whistles. Foley, too, was after the quarry with less than a minute lost.

Tim half sobbed as he cursed himself for not having his gun with him—not that he wanted to kill his way to the straight and narrow path he had resolved to try once more; but the display of a weapon would have been of great service in commandeering a taxi. From the screeching of the whistles, he knew that he would have little chance of making the usual avenues of escape from the neighborhood.

He had only one advantage. His boyhood had been spent in the Bronx, and he knew every street and alley, every gully, every rookery. He twisted and doubled in his flight like the fox that he was. It was midnight, and, save for himself and his pursuers, rapidly increasing in number, the streets were deserted. This was bad enough, for he could have lost himself in a crowd. To make his chances dwindle further, the noise of the hunt brought hundreds of heads to the windows.

"There he goes!"

The night was not dark enough. Every planet and satellite and star was on the job. The Milky Way widely traced the heavens like the veil of an archangel's bride dropped from the walls of Paradise.

"There he goes!"

"Blau! Blau—blau!"



The whistles shrieked louder and the night sticks rang sharply against the iron standards of the street lights. Tim knew that he could not stay in the streets much longer. He had felt the almost hairy touch of the last bullet that passed him.

He darted into a tenement house doorway, a place where poor people lived, without the modern improvements—no electric bells, no janitor. As he had hoped, he found the entrance unbolted and unlocked. Through the hall he hurried silently to the back yard.

Here was a block of little fenced-in patches of land, crossed with clotheslines, each with its basement entrance, and with little windows easily forced—little windows leading to underground rooms packed with rubbish and junk of all kind. It was the last thicket for the fox. The hounds would have to scratch their way to him as he moved from corner to corner.

The clamor in the streets died down as Tim lay flat in the shadows of a fence, ready to spring up and clamber over it to his next breathing spot. The cops and detectives were surrounding the block and preparing to make a house-to-house search. He was determined to get away. There was the kid to think of, and Mary. They might need him any minute; and although the detectives might not be able to prove a case on him, they could hold him almost indefinitely with the countless measure of their delays.

As he heard the groping searchers near him, he would shift from one little square of back yard to another, slithering over the fences or through openings in them.

For hours the game of chess was played. At the sound of a footfall Tim knew that it was his move. The veil of the archangel's bride began to return to the walls of Paradise. The planets lost their bright gleam, and the stars trooped away by the thousand. His greatest enemy, the sun, was stalking its way to the brow of the earth, to render him helpless, to strike him stone blind with the brilliancy of its first silver arrow. A glance at the sky above warned him.

A bell tolled softly the call for the first mass in St. Joseph's. It was not a big and proud bell, but a little one, as befitted such a humble little parish church, with an old priest whose life was given to the property and suffering of others.

Tim once more climbed a fence. It was

his last move. Here the cops would take him, unless something happened.

He was behind the church. Lights shone dimly within. He found a cellar window, the latch of which he easily raised with his pocket knife. He was on holy ground, but the right of sanctuary had long been abolished, with other beautiful things of the days of chivalry.

He knew this cellar. As a boy he had helped to stoke the furnace for Father Kennedy, many a winter's morning before serving at the altar, blind though he was. Narrow steps ran up to the vestry where the good priest, whispering his Latin ritual, sleepily robed himself as the little handful of the faithful drifted into the church from the streets.

Outside, Tim could hear the pack closing in. Above, he heard the heels of the priest. In a few minutes he would be hauled from the coal bin and taken away.

But Father Kennedy had always been his friend, pitying his affliction, and not only his friend but the friend of all those who came to him in sore distress. Tim mounted the stairs and opened the little door.

"It's Tim O'Brien, father," he announced. "I'm in trouble, and the light's coming. I ain't crooked any more, father, but they're after me. My wife is dead, and I want to get to my boy."

The priest turned from his robing. Under a shock of gray hair his lean face was cut deep with the old message of suffering in Christ's name, but in his blue eyes shone the light of holy candles, soft and compassionate.

"There's no one to serve at the altar with me, Tim," he said with a smile. "The boys are a lazy lot these days. There's a surplice and a cassock—my old ones. You can use them. But hurry, son, hurry! It seems as if some one is rummaging around in the cellar."

### VIII

TIM, until the blond siren had netted him, had been true to the ancient faith of his people. His lapse had been only a matter of three years. He was a novice in crime, but long-tried in a faith which, once accepted, is never entirely lost. His memory held its ritual, and he remembered the number of steps to be taken from vestry to altar and back; to go to the little serving table at the lavabo; to change the missal

at the gospels. The kindly priest had taught him to walk in darkness with a sure step, and at many a mass had prayed that the boy's strangely afflicted eyes might receive the power to behold the beauty of dawn and the smiling, sunlit world.

In the old cassock and surplice of Father Kennedy, Tim knelt at the altar and bowed his head as two men came up the cellar stairs and hurriedly searched the vestry. They did not desecrate the altar by crossing it, but hastened through a side door and to the front of the church, where they peered at each of the worshipers and looked into the confessional box.

"*Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!*" chanted the priest.

Tim sounded the altar bell beside him—"Holy! Holy! Holy!" as if warning to the invaders.

Father Kennedy was very slow, and the sonorous Latin came haltingly from his lips.

"His years are telling on him," whispered an old woman to the friend beside her. "He is nearing the great reward."

The sun was above the roofs, streaming through the colored window panes, and splashing the empty pews with blue and gold and crimson, when the priest, having said his last prayer, lifted his biretta and placed it on his head. From Tim's blind eyes came two tears. He had been made whole again by God's mercy and by the kindness of God's servant. There was mingled humility and exaltation within him. His spiritual eyes, which had been closed, were open once more.

"Keep on the cassock, my son," said the priest, as he laid aside his vestments.

Together they crossed a little court to Father Kennedy's house, and in a few moments were safe in his study.

The housekeeper came to tell of the search for an escaped burglar, and to bring the priest's breakfast.

"Have they all gone?" the old man asked.

"Yes, father."

"Then bring some breakfast for my old friend, Brother O'Brien, who dropped in to serve at the mass this morning."

The priest helped his old altar boy, guiding his hand to the coffee cup and his knife and fork to the bacon.

"I think you've done mighty well, Tim," he said, when they had finished the slight repast. "Now tell me all your troubles, lad. It's my job to hear them."

"There wasn't any work, father, and so I stole," said Tim.

"Much?"

"Not much, and the police got nearly all of it back."

"But during the war you must have made good wages?"

"I didn't stay home."

Father Kennedy stared incredulously into the sightless eyes.

"But certainly, Tim, you didn't get across, blind as you are?"

"I got a job as a night stoker on a transport," replied Tim. "Then I got another night job in France, unloading ships. Kearney was my captain. You remember Dave Kearney, who used to serve at the altar with me?"

"Yes—a fine boy!"

"Dave was sent up to the front to handle ammunition, and he took me along. He was afraid I'd get hurt, being blind in the daytime. We stuck together, and he let me drive an ammunition truck at nights. I was hoping a shell would hit me."

"Why?"

"Just—just—because I get tired of the night."

Father Kennedy reached over and took one of Tim's hands in his.

"God hates a coward," he said. "And then?"

"We come back from the war, and there wasn't any jobs for a lot of us."

"Well, Tim, I know of a job." The breakfast was finished. "It's a night watchman's job in Shayne's jewelry factory, over by the Hudson River. The man who holds it must be strictly honest, and the bond will be high. I'll have to swear to your being fit for it, and I think I can get the money to have you bonded."

"As God is my judge, father, I'll keep straight, never mind what happens!"

"Then I'll put you to bed and hustle out after that job. It will be easy for me to get you out of this neighborhood to-night in a taxi. In a month or two you'll be on your feet again. I'll find a boarding place in the neighborhood of the factory. Later you can get your baby. Who's taking care of the child?"

"A girl from an orphan asylum. Her name's Mary Duffy."

As Father Kennedy reached his doorstep, and paused for a moment to bask in the warm sunshine, he smiled and muttered to himself:

"Blind, and yet getting to the battle front with the best of them! That's Tim O'Brien!"

## IX

It was the right kind of a job in which Tim landed. Shayne wanted a man who would be quick to fight back if burglars broke into his place, with its boxes and cases of cheap ornaments and its safe filled with gold and silver for making the higher grades for the trade. The pay was good, so that the guardian of the jewelry stock might not be tempted to lend himself to a dishonest proposition from the outside. The hours were from nine in the evening until six in the morning.

As the sun rose earlier with the advancing season, Tim would find himself cut off from his lodging place during the last half hour, or hour, of his trick. Father Kennedy fixed that. When it came to helping people, Father Kennedy could perform miracles.

In a little house adjoining the factory lived Mrs. Devlin, an old Irishwoman who would be glad to take in a quiet boarder. She had a front room on the ground floor, twenty paces from the factory entrance. The priest confided to her the nature of Tim's affliction. She was filled with pity for the young man.

"And he's an overseas boy," Father Kennedy informed her.

"Ah, it was the gas done it!" Mrs. Devlin exclaimed, and he did not tell her differently. "I'll be at the door every morning for him, and a good hot breakfast will be ready for him. One of me own boys is still over in France, and will never come back."

"And now, Tim," said Father Kennedy, in bidding his blind burglar good-by, "are you all set?"

"All set, father!"

"Remember, my word and my bond are back of you."

"I won't forget. I hope I'll be struck dead if I ever try to do another job except what's honest!"

The priest went away, with his old alpaca coat flapping about his legs in the night breeze from the river.

With gratitude in his heart, Tim settled down to his job, making the rounds of the factory every hour, turning the watchman's register on each floor, trying doors and windows, and keeping his ears cocked for any sound that might break the stillness of

the night. His mind would turn to Agnes occasionally. Now that she was gone, he put no blame on her for his derelictions. It was all his own fault and the fault of the night company he had kept.

His landlady invariably met him in the morning, although he did not really need her for so few steps in a deserted street. His attempts to dissuade her from taking trouble in his behalf were vain. Within a month he had taken the place in the home and heart left vacant by the lad who was still in France.

Every evening the good woman brought him a newspaper—the newspaper through which he hoped to get word from Mary. Not a line of it did he let go unsearched through his enlarging glass.

Summer came, and his anxiety for Mary and Red increased so that he became sleepless and morbid. He could eat but little. If she would only send just a line, saying that she and the baby were safe! The bulls might have locked her up and sent Red to a foundling asylum; but even if they did have Mary in a cell, she was bright enough to get an advertisement through. He had left her plenty of money.

He was despairing of ever hearing from her when his paper gave him this message in the personal column:

MR. TIM—164 S. B. Co., N. J. Quick.

In the shipping department there was a railroad guide. "N. J." was easy enough. He looked through New Jersey. What did "S. B. Co." mean? Perhaps it was intended for some company with which she was working.

He ran his finger down the names of the Jersey towns and villages. There were many starting with the letter "S." In a flash he had it. Mary was sure a bright one! The "B. Co." stood for Bergen County, just across the Hudson from the Bronx and Yonkers. "S." would probably be a station on the Northern Division of the Erie, running through the valley just over the Palisades, or on the West Shore. He got the time-tables, and found Skydale.

The next point in the code to unravel was "164." In a village, of course, there would be no Sixty-Fourth Street. The address must be 16 Fourth Street. There was hardly a likelihood of there being a Fourth Street in Skydale long enough to require division into East and West or North and South.

What peril was she in? The word "quick" terrified him. He looked at the office clock, and did some fast figuring. Before he could reach Skydale and search the village for the street and number—assuming that his guess was correct—the dawn would be coming. He had not spent a cent of his wages. A fast machine could get him down to the Fort Lee ferry and across, or, better still, over the Dyckman ferry to Englewood.

He was preparing to call a garage when he dropped the telephone book with a groan. Who would guard the factory? If anything happened, it would go back to Father Kennedy. Tim would have to pay!

Perhaps the thought of his duty to the priest brought him the inspiration. He called for long distance, and asked for Skydale, in Bergen County. Yes, the village was listed. The Skydale operator, in her dingy little room above the grocery store, took the call.

"Is there a phone at 16 Fourth Street?" asked Tim. "I've forgotten the name of the party. I'm just out of the hospital. It's important."

"The Rev. Dr. Ashmead Horton lives there. Sure, he's got a phone. A minute, please!"

"The Rev. Dr. Horton!" thought Tim. "What the—"

"Here's your party."

"Hello!" said Mary's voice.

"Mary?"

"Yes!"

"Tim O'Brien."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear from you! Are all well?"

"What's the trouble?"

"We're all well, and the baby's fine."

"Other people in the room with you?"

"Yes."

"Do you need me now—to-night?"

"No. I'm fine, thank you."

"To-morrow night, then—about ten o'clock. If there's no light in the kitchen window, I'll tap three times on the pane. Get me?"

"There are a number of things you must tell me about."

She stressed the word number.

"There's nothing, except I was worried about you and the kid."

"Oh, a number of things!" she repeated.

"That's all there is."

"But you don't seem to hear me. I said 'number.'"

"Oh!"

He understood, and gave her his telephone number.

"Yes, thank you very much. I'm so glad. Good-by!"

Whatever was the reason for the word "quick" in her call to him, it was evident that she was in no immediate peril. Her voice over the wire had been smooth—unusually smooth. It had a different quality, although it was as sweet as ever to his ears. She was talking "like a lady." Perhaps she had got into some difficulty by pretending to be other than she really was.

Puzzled, he laid out his plans to go to her the following night. Mrs. Devlin could report him sick, and Shayne could easily get a man from one of the burglary protective companies to fill the place until his return.

Tim was starting his rounds of the factory when the telephone rang.

"Tim?"

"Yes!"

"There were people in the next room, and I was afraid to tell you." Her voice had lost its smoothness, and through it he could all but feel the flutter of her heart.

"Tim?"

"Yes."

"You've got to do something for me. Listen! Bring a jimmy with you, and a pistol. There's some one coming down stairs. Thank you very much. Good-by!"

"A jimmy and a pistol!" gasped Tim. "What kind of devilry is going on?"

He drew his automatic from its holster and looked it over carefully. Later, in the shipping room, he found a chisel strong enough to force any window latch or ordinary door lock.

His promise to Father Kennedy came back to him during the long, quiet hours after midnight, but the call of Mary was stronger. It was a call he could not help answering. Red was mixed up in this strange business. He might have been taken from Mary and put into a foundling asylum. Perhaps she wanted Tim to break in and steal his own kid!

## X

Just as Mary slipped the telephone receiver into its bracket, a tall, rather handsome man of about thirty years came down the winding stairway of Dr. Horton's old-fashioned country house. He was in evening clothes, his linen immaculate.



The son and only child of the editor of the *Sunshine Weekly* paused in the hall to light a cigarette and chat with his mother's pretty companion. His parents had retired.

"It's ten o'clock, Mary," he said mockingly. "Little girls should be in bed!"

"I'm going now, Mr. Robert."

"Well, kiss me good night and run along," he laughed, leaning over and offering her a cheek.

Mary, standing on tiptoes, brushed his black-clad shoulder with her lips very lightly.

"It's as far as I can reach, Mr. Robert," she told him, drawing back quickly.

He caressed a little blond mustache thoughtfully, sighed, and said:

"Well, I suppose I shall have to wait until you grow up, Mary."

Under the hall light, his large gray eyes twinkled and his weak mouth spread in a smile which many a young woman in the Skydale summer colony had described as "adorable." He picked up a soft hat and his walking stick.

"But never fear, Mary," he added. "If you grow up, so will Red grow up, and you will have some one to protect you from the wiles of men!"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll be in late, Mary—as usual. Good night!"

"Good night."

Robert Horton closed the door softly behind him and drew on his gloves, lingering on the porch, well shadowed by rose vines.

Set in two acres of land, back from a road arched with stately old elms, its grounds beautified by years of tender care given to beds of perennials and flowering bushes, the two-story-and-attic home represented a lifetime of work, study, and hard saving. It had originally been a stone farmhouse, built by one of the many Dutch settlers who came early to the pleasant valley which starts in northern New Jersey and runs north in New York State until the Palisades end with a last leap toward the sky at Grand View. It was a snug home, and no sweeter possession could have been dreamed of by the veteran editor of the *Sunshine Weekly* and his fragile wife.

His cheery publication, backed by his church, brought in for Dr. Horton just enough profit to provide the little family with food and other necessities, gasoline for the flivver, a little for the neighborhood poor, and although it had entailed a strug-

gle, an education for Robert. There was never much money ahead, although they had always been careful enough.

A home and a good name seemed sufficient for the minister. For the son, who had easily drifted into the gay existence of the wealthy people who filled the fine mansions topping the Palisades, and gathering wider acres as they extended northward toward the Tuxedo country, these two priceless things meant only poverty. He had been educated for the law, but had proved a misfit. The lavishness with which parents give their love to an only child had brought him to manhood a dependent and a weakling.

Robert remained in the shadows of the porch until his cigarette was finished. Then, avoiding the gravel path leading around the south side of the house, he walked with soundless steps over the moonlit sod to a point where he could study the attic windows.

Mary had gone to her room. He caught silhouette glimpses of her as she plaited her abundant hair, preparatory to retiring. The engaging smile of the philanderer was no longer on his features. The lines of the weak mouth were hard set, and his eloquent eyes were jumpy.

Mary's light went out. Robert strolled to the front gate and lit another cigarette, carefully shielding the light on the farther side of a great elm. There was plenty of time. The card party at Arthur Forrester's would not get under way before eleven o'clock. There was always supper first, and wine; but he didn't drink.

Ten minutes, twenty minutes he waited, and then, without even the click of the night latch, he let himself back into the house. A vest pocket flash light guided him through the hall, the parlor, and the dining room, and to the little study in the rear, where were his father's beloved books and desk.

Just over the desk was a sepia photograph of the "Sistine Madonna," the bottom of its mahogany frame barely touching a rack of small volumes. Robert removed it and pressed a hidden spring, and a little door flew open. Within was a tin money box. It bore this label:

#### FUNDS FOR NEAR EAST RELIEF

He had a key for it, and for the fourth time he was dipping into it for gambling money.

"This night," he assured himself, "I've got to win, and I'm going to win. It's against everything in the calculus of chance always to lose, when your game is carefully played."

From the inside pocket of his tuxedo he drew a long package of paper slips, which he substituted for the certificates that he took from a neat stack held together with rubber bands. His lips puckered in a soundless whistle as he realized that he had taken so much of the money that there was only just enough left to cover the top and bottom of the fattening dummy.

If he lost again! But he couldn't lose. He wouldn't lose. He was not playing bridge, where worry over his speculations might interfere with his game. He was playing stud poker, where all the cards of a hand, save one, were face up on the table. It was a fast game, of course, but not a game in which a man could be easily gulled.

Forrester's crowd consisted of his friends, all nice people, from the best of families. Forrester himself was a newcomer—an English gentleman with plenty of money, a connoisseur of books and pictures, the New York representative of an English linen manufacturer. He had taken the fine old Westervelt place furnished, the Westervelts having gone abroad.

Robert pocketed the money, locked the box, closed the little door, rehung the picture, and left his home as quietly as a burglar of long experience. From a darkened attic window Mary Duffy saw him as he hurriedly made his way to his ruin, and to the ruin of his old parents. The tears burned her pretty cheeks. She liked Mr. Robert. He was liked by everybody. He wasn't bad; he was just weak.

## XI

ARTHUR FORRESTER, sometimes called Silent Forrester in London and Paris, never hunted for small game. Tall, lean, gray, with the beak of a hawk above a drooping white mustache, the Englishman was fitted by nature and by training to range with the wolves. The lambs did not interest him.

If the innocents were baited, caught, and sheared by stock market manipulators, and any one of the shearers became famous in the public prints for picking up a million or so overnight, Mr. Forrester would study the possibilities of shearing the shearer. If the intended victim came into the class of

"good prospects," the silent one would send forth his "come on." While the way was being paved for his operations, he would thoroughly establish his background, perhaps entering the market himself with a good-sized speculative account, and using the same broker as the man for whom he was gunning.

He was in full cry after the owner of a great summer estate near Skydale when he leased the Westervelt place and gradually eased himself into the set to which his "prospect" belonged. To sport good servants, a wine cellar—boasting some of the precious Charleston Madeira, long thought utterly consumed—a striking pair of hackneys for the country roads, two excellent machines, and always a quiet affability, was enough to make him welcome. He played a good game of golf, and, despite his years, showed a swift stroke and a lightning eye at tennis.

The rich man's passion was stud poker with the deuces running wild—a swift game, and perhaps the simplest of all games for the card sharp. It was a game that Robert Horton had studied earnestly in college—had studied with that profound attention which only a minister's son could give. It was annoying to Forrester that the young man found a place at the gaming table with those really worth plucking; for in the event of his being badly hurt he might cry out before the time came to strike camp.

Forrester had to lose money to his intended victim, in the beginning, just to prove that he was a good sport, and that the game was honest. Robert thus had a fair chance, and on the first evening he increased the little money he had to a fair stake for future games.

The sharper tried to shake him off, but could not. Robert was always with the sporting set, and, as he was always a likable fellow, the sporting set was for Robert.

The limit of betting was raised until only the roof of the Forrester domicile held it down. The time had come for the exertion of those arts in which Silent Forrester had no equal on either continent. The rich "sucker" was nipped, and Robert was cleaned out.

At home, the fund of which his father was the custodian tempted him. In almost any stationery store he could buy a similar tin box, with a similar key. A hairpin would have opened the lock, for that mat-

ter. He would borrow just enough to get back into the game, and would replace it that night.

Dr. Horton's idea in keeping the greenbacks in his study safe was entirely consistent with his visionary, almost boyish nature. On the final day of the drive it was his intention to pile the money on the pulpit of the Skydale church, and to build beside it a pillar of hymn books which would overtop the currency. Then he would exhort the wealthy members of the congregation to bring the two piles to a level, and thus, perhaps, he would add several thousands of dollars in the last hour of the drive. He considered it a very clever scheme.

Ten thousand dollars had been put into the tin box when Robert visited it for the fourth time. Hardly more than five hundred dollars remained to cover the dummy when he left the house on the night when Mary Duffy paged Tim O'Brien. Coming downstairs one night for hot milk for Red, she had found Mr. Robert nervously looking over the little volumes in the rack on the study desk, and had not failed to notice the crazy tilt of the "Sistine Madonna." The next day, while dusting the room, she looked behind the picture, felt along the wall paper, and discovered what was going on.

From the nurse maids of neighbors, always packed with gossip, she learned of the Forrester crowd. Once the gambler was pointed out to her, as he drove by behind his high-steppers. His impassive face, with the high-rising beak and the lean features in repose, showed all its cold cruelty. It was in terrible contrast to the smiling, trusting charm of the editor of the *Sunshine Weekly*, content with the work of trying to bring cheer to others, with his none too bountiful table, his well worn clothes, and his deep love for his son.

Mary loved the old people. Their home was a paradise to her. Until Dr. Horton had flivvered her there she had not known the beauty of wide stretches of real sky, quiet fields, and the gentle undulations of the foothills of distant mountains. The old elm trees, rising like green fountains, the moonlight trickling like honey through the vines, the fragrance of summer nights in the country, the well dressed people, their horses and dogs, all seemed to her to have been created by the touch of a magic wand upon some motion-picture screen where they had been but pale prisoners.

She knew that Dr. Horton was not rich, for not only was she a companion to his wife, but when their one servant left them she capably took entire charge of the ménage. She haggled with the village merchants, cooked, dusted, and made the beds, while Red waxed strong out in the open.

Before Mary sent out the call to Tim, she peeped into the study safe, picked the lock of the money box, and discovered the substitution by which Mr. Robert had fooled the more or less feeble eyes of his father. The following Sunday would be the day of reckoning. It was Thursday when she talked with Tim. He might be able to get back the money in time!

As Mr. Robert was being fleeced of the last installment of the Near Eastern Fund, Mary knelt in the attic and prayed:

"Dear Lord, get Mr. Tim here in time, and keep us all out of trouble!"

## XII

IN the morning Dr. Horton flivvered to New York and his office. His wife helped Mary as much as she could, and in the forenoon went forth to visit the sick of the village.

Mr. Robert showed a haggard face in the dining room, and asked for a cup of coffee.

"I'm in a lot of trouble," he informed Mary. "I'm catching the next train for the city. There is a chance of my getting an old school friend to help me out."

"Be home to-night?"

"To-morrow morning—or noon, at the latest."

"Well, keep smiling," Mary said cheerfully. "That's the watchword in this house. Nobody's going to help a fellow with a face full of gloom."

"Keep smiling!" he echoed. "My God, Mary, I'd willingly lay down my life if I could undo what I have done!"

"No dead man's worth a cent. Here are two soft-boiled eggs I fixed for you. Don't weaken." She followed him to the door. "Promise me you'll be back at noon to-morrow," she said.

"Why?"

"Because. Do you promise?"

"I'll be back, Mary. I'm a bad egg, I know, but I'm no coward."

Alone in the house, Mary locked front and rear doors, and then examined the doctor's money box. As he had added the cash from collections turned in to him, he

had noted the amounts on a sheet of paper, ready to be totaled on Sunday morning for his weekly accounting to the congregation of the Skydale church. Mary found a scratch pad and added up the figures. A count of the money showed that the fund was short nine thousand, four hundred dollars.

She fed the baby and put him out in the shade of the rose bushes, seating herself on the porch steps to think out the situation. During the evening Dr. and Mrs. Horton would go to the Friday night services at the church. They would remain for the social hour afterward, when the faithful of the congregation gossiped pleasantly over iced tea, lemonade, and lady fingers.

Tim would arrive at ten. Red would be pounding his pillow. She could show her old boss the Forrester house. It would be dark by eleven o'clock, because the summer colonists gave their big dance on Friday night at the country club, a good five miles away, and the servants always took advantage of their absence.

There would be one man on guard in the Forrester home—Watson, valet and body servant to the gambler. Watson was a young fellow, and very heady when it came to the ladies. He had passed the time of day with Mary more than once, and had tried to get her to go riding with him. If she could get him to renew that invitation, then Mr. Trim could back up a van to the place and strip it.

"I'll give him a call."

It was the Forrester butler who answered the telephone.

"Mr. Jimmy Watson, please."

"Who wants him?"

"Tell him Mary—just Mary."

Mr. Forrester was in the city. Jimmy languished over the wire.

"It's Mary Duffy," she told him.

"The darlin' of my heart!"

"And I'm tired to death of mindin' the baby, doin' the cookin', sweepin' the house, and everything."

"How about a ride over the hills and far away?"

"It's a preacher's family. I'm workin' for."

"The boss will be home early. He'll need me in the afternoon, and until he goes to the dance. Can you meet me after that?"

"It will be late."

"How late, Mary darlin'?"

"Eleven o'clock. They'll all be in bed."

"Where'll you be?"

"Under the big elm in front of the house."

She hung up. Jimmy Watson was dated. Could she handle him? He was a wild one. The girls all looked scared when they talked about him; but they always laughed, just the same.

All afternoon, as she went about her duties, she studied the possibilities of the rendezvous with Jimmy Watson. Toward evening she had settled on one thing. In the hem of her little ready-made jacket she inserted a long, sharp-pointed steel hatpin. If he was going to try any manhandling, or girlhandling, like in "The Perils of Pauline," he would find out what was what!

She also tucked in a pocket of the jacket a police whistle, kept in the house to summon the constable in case of trouble, should the constable happen to be laying off the pinochle game in the basement of the town hall.

Dr. Horton returned from town, and they had supper. Red was fed and tucked into his bed in the attic.

At eight o'clock a soft-voiced bell gently sent out its summons on the summer air, and the doctor and his wife, quiet and thoughtful as the moonlit evening itself, walked arm in arm toward the church through the pools of gold and velvet shadows along Elm Street.

Mr. Trim would soon come. Mary waited in the kitchen with a fast-beating heart. Sometimes she would laugh softly to herself, and again she would cry for a little while.

Of course, he belonged to the blond woman, but she couldn't help it. He was the first man who had been kind and gentle to her, the first young man she had known. He had winning ways. Once he had thrown her up in the air and had kissed her on her way down. He had kissed her good-by at parting, and now he was hurrying to her to save two dear, sweet old people from shame, disgrace, and poverty.

She was at the kitchen door when three little taps sounded on the window. She opened to him, and there he was on the step, lithe and trim, his dark face serious, looking up to her. She reached out her arms and with a glad little cry put them about his neck.

When the ache in her heart was relieved, she took him inside and told him the whole



story. She showed him the hidden safe in the study, and the money box.

"He'll never let Mr. Robert take the blame," she said. "He'll take it himself, and sell his home to pay back. He's spent all his life helping others, and me and Red love the ground he walks on!"

"Mary, I'm going straight—straight as a string." Tim's confession sent her into tears. "Agnes is dead"—she brightened up perceptibly—"and I got a good job. There's a home ready for you and Red."

"The house will be empty at eleven o'clock. It's just getting back the money stolen from Dr. Horton," Mary sobbed.

"But in the morning," he protested. "Where will I hide all day to-morrow?"

"Up in the attic, in my room. Nobody ever comes up there."

"Who's this Forrester fellow?"

"A gambler."

"I promised Father Kennedy—"

"It's a charity job."

"Will you be waiting up for me?"

"Right here in the kitchen."

"Where are the old folks?"

"At church."

Tim pulled his cap down to his ears, felt for the chisel under his flannel shirt, touched the pistol and the flash light in his coat pocket, and decided to try it.

"Show me the house," he said. "There's nobody on the streets, and I want to get a good look at how the land lays."

### XIII

By eleven o'clock Tim had gone on his mission, the Hortons were in bed, Mary was in the kitchen, with a tam pulled over her bonny head, her hatpin handy in the hem of her jacket, and Jimmy Watson waiting under the big elm, his car in the shadows down the road.

Mary went to the tryst, watchful of her step, her heart glad that Tim was free, her heart singing a song of joy within her.

Jimmy grabbed her. It was his way, and the moon was high in the heavens. Besides, near the road was a bed of narcissus, and the creamy petals fairly burdened the night with their rich perfume.

"Ow!" gasped Mary. "Wait a minute. There's a pin sticking in me."

"I been crazy about you, kid, ever since I first seen you," panted Jimmy. "Let's jump this bunch! I can go back to the house and clean up enough cash to take us anywhere we want to go."

"Shout it to the world," Mary told herself, "that I'm going to have some job handling this roughneck!" She pulled free of his arms. "Jimmy, I got to be careful," she sparrd. "There's the baby. He might wake up and begin yelling, and then they'd find out I wasn't home."

"We'll take a little spin. The car's down at the corner."

"I got to go to a drug store first, for some peppermint. He's been having the stomachache. Wait here for me. Then I'll go."

"I'll ride you there."

"No—people would see us and talk. I'll be right back."

Jimmy grabbed for her again, but she avoided him and ran in the direction of the business street of the village. Every minute she could kill would help. Halfway to the drug store she turned back and hung a crape on Jimmy's joy by telling him that she had forgotten to bring any money with her. He dug down for a dollar, but in giving it to her he managed to get her in his arms again.

Even that helped to give Tim more time. He was rough, wild with desire, but Mary rejoiced at every moment gained.

"You hurt me! You hurt me!" He had half dragged, half carried her to the car. "Let me go! I'll scream!"

She fell against a rear tire as he released her.

"If you'll behave, I'll be right back," she promised, and was off again for the peppermint.

For a solid three-quarters of an hour Jimmy Watson waited, swearing softly under his breath for letting such a little devil make a fool of him. Mary, fearful that he might give up in disgust and speed home, showed up at the end of that time with the excuse that she had found the pharmacy closed, and that she had had no end of trouble in stirring up the owner with the night bell.

"Now I'll just run in the house, give him a dose, and be right back," she said.

"Damn the kid!" Jimmy groaned, as he sat down on the running board.

This time, Mary figured, he could stand about thirty minutes, and she let him wait the limit. It was a quarter past twelve. Tim ought to be coming back within half an hour. He had promised to be at the kitchen door no later than one o'clock.

"I've got to keep that Jimmy Watson

on the fire for at least half an hour more," she decided. "I got to do it!"

Red was sleeping gloriously, snuggled deep on his side of the bed they shared. She kissed him softly, and then went to the rear attic window and stared out into the night. She was afraid that if she lingered, Jimmy would give up in disgust and return to his post of duty, perhaps to find Tim at work.

She was working her busy little brain on all cylinders, hoping for an inspiration that would help her out, when she noticed that the windows of a house on the next street were all lighted. It was the Feldman home, and she knew that Mrs. Feldman was expecting a baby. She leaned from the window, and through the foliage she made out the dimmed lights of the doctor's flivver. He was the only doctor for miles around, and his home was a cottage far back in the western hills, at the end of a broken old quarry road, over which no gasoline vehicle of any weight could travel without strong chances of broken springs.

The right plan came to Mary's mind. She hurried down the back stairs, through the kitchen, and to the road.

"Oh, Jimmy, dear Jimmy!" she whispered in anguish, a hand over her heart and tears pouring down her cheeks—just as she had seen Pauline Frederick do it a thousand times in the jitney drama.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"He's dying! Little Red's dying! If you love me, Jimmy, run up to Dr. McKellar's house and bring him. Oh, my darling little baby boy! Oh, Jimmy! Oh, my poor little baby!"

She dropped to the road, half sitting, half kneeling. Her little shoulders trembled with make-believe sobs.

"What ails him?" demanded Jimmy, surprised out of much of his eagerness.

"Paralysis," she blurted, taking the first thing that flashed into her mind. "He's blue in the face, and his little limbs are stiff! Get the doctor for me, Jimmy, and I'll be your slave for the rest of my life. I'll kiss your feet. Just help me save Red!"

When it came right down to nickelodeon tragedy, Mary Duffy was not inclined to hold back anything on anybody. She put her pretty face right down against one of Jimmy's boots.

With a half uttered curse, he pulled back and then climbed into the car.

"Where in thunder does this sawbones live?" he demanded. "Git up out of the dirt!"

"Right straight ahead and through the old quarry road to the end."

"Is the road open?"

"Yes. Hurry, Jimmy! In pity's name, hurry!"

He stepped on the gas and went at high speed on his fruitless errand, to the disappointment of his hopes and at grievous risk to his employer's expensive tires.

"Sure it's open!" said Mary to herself, as she dusted her clothes. "And the eye of a needle is open, but the camel in the Bible couldn't get through it! Only a Henry Detroit would try it."

Ah, but it was sweet to help Mr. Tim, she thought, as the roses crowded her cheeks. She waited in the road for him, and could have cried for happiness when his wiry figure came darting toward her.

"Tim!"

He had no time for heroics.

"Is all set?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then let's get in. I've got the money!"

#### XIV

As they entered the kitchen of the Horton home, a locomotive whistle sounded in the distance.

"What train's that?" whispered Tim. "I might be able to get back before day-break."

"That's the last train from New York. There won't be a train to the city before morning," Mary replied.

She lit the kitchen gas jet, and turned it down to a spark.

"Here's the servants' stairway to the attic," she said, opening a door. "I don't have to use it, but it leads right up to my room. I better run up and get in my night clothes. I'll see if the baby is all right and if the old folks are sleeping sound."

Tim, soft-footed as a cat, went to the study and took the money box from its hiding place. He carried it to the kitchen, where he carefully removed the paper padding from the Near East Fund and counted the cash he had painlessly extracted from Forrester's ill-gotten hoard. He found that in his haste he had erred on the safe side of the ledger, for he had taken about fifteen hundred dollars too much. The surplus would set up Mary and Red and himself in housekeeping.

He was tucking the extra money into his pocket when his promise to Father Kennedy came to him. Tim argued that it was stolen money, a thief's money; but he knew what the good priest would say in answer to that. He could not help realizing that Father Kennedy, when he undertook to hide him from his pursuers at God's own altar, had put his very priesthood in peril. Tim added the stolen money to the Near East Fund. The orphans of Armenia and the Holy Land would have an extra hand-out coming to them.

Mary was still prowling about the attic in her nightgown, busy with Red, when Tim flashed his light against the wall of the study. As he was about to put the money box into the cavity, he noticed that the slip of paper with the figures of the collections was at the bottom, when it should have been on the top. He lifted out the cash to remedy his error, when the room was suddenly flooded with light. In the door of the study stood Robert Horton, who had taken the last train from the city.

Tim's gun flashed from his pocket and stayed at a sure level as young Horton's hands went up slowly. The minister's son had come back without a penny, prepared to confess to his father in the morning; but here, as if by the very mercy of God, was a blessed intervention—a burglar! The intruder would take away all evidence of Robert's crime, and leave no stain upon his father or upon himself.

The money was in Tim's left hand, the gun in his right. Both men were doing some fast thinking. If Tim placed the money back in the little vault, and retreated, Robert Horton would know that he was not there to rob. If he attempted to explain, he would have to admit that he had broken into Forrester's house and stolen the money.

"Listen!" whispered Tim. "Turn your back to me, and keep them hands up!"

Robert obeyed, rejoicing at the lifting of the terrible load from his mind.

"Don't move or make a sound for five minutes," Tim ordered.

He stepped backward from the study door leading into the rear of the hall. He entered the kitchen, opened and closed the door leading to the yard, dropped the package of money on the kitchen floor, and then hurried up the servants' stairs to the attic.

"The young man's below," he told Mary. "Hurry down and let out a yell.

Lock the door leading up here. It's all right!"

She had hardly started when they heard Robert dash through the kitchen to the yard. He had found the family pistol in the drawer of the study desk.

"Robbers! Thieves!" he was yelling, as he aroused the neighbors by firing the pistol into the air—double-riveting his alibi, as he thought.

## XV

THE neighbors flocked in. The constable, heavily whiskered and armed, arrived with leisurely dignity. Mrs. Horton, in a wrapper, her white hair done up in papers, trembled and sobbed in the parlor. Dr. Horton, miserable and dejected, sat at his desk before the looted treasure of the little Armenians.

Robert told his story, and had to repeat it again and again. As the sleep drifted away from the minds of the neighbors, they took a sharper interest in what Robert was saying. The constable appeared by no means entirely credulous. He carefully examined the doors and the windows. There was no sign of forcing. That was Tim's one mistake.

"He must have had a key to the kitchen door," insisted Robert, fear creeping into his heart.

The constable knew, and his neighbors knew, that young Horton had frequently come home late from Forrester's, and the servants may have talked of the gambling parties. Everybody had heard gossip of large sums wagered. He went into minute details of stumbling on the burglar. His eagerness made matters worse. He could feel the growing suspicion and antipathy of the listeners.

"There should be the burglar's fingerprints on the box," Robert declared. "He didn't wear gloves."

"And on the knob of the kitchen door, maybe," suggested the constable. "Let's look! Nobody touch the box while I flash a light on the door knob."

The whole company followed him to the kitchen.

"Excuse the looks of things," Mrs. Horton said, with the instinct of the housewife, as she ran her eyes hurriedly about the place.

A package on the floor attracted her attention. At first she thought it waste paper.

"What is it?" she asked her husband, giving it to him. "If it's rubbish, put it in the stove."

"Rubbish! Rubbish!" he shouted. "It's the money! It must have dropped from the thief's pocket. Thank the good Lord! Oh, thank the good Lord!"

His son turned away from the little crowd. The end had come! They would find the sheets of paper that would tell his guilt. The heaven-sent burglar, through his carelessness, would add "liar" to the deserved epithet of "thief." Robert sank into a chair in the study and fairly shriveled up, awaiting the blow, his head in his hands.

"Count it!" called some one.

"I'm counting it right now," replied Dr. Horton.

Robert could hear the bills being straightened out. Why didn't his father tell about the paper slips? Perhaps he saw through it all, and was trying to save him.

"Why," cried Dr. Horton after a long pause, "I must have made a mistake in counting the collections. There seems to be fifteen hundred dollars too much!"

"Perhaps it was the burglar's money from some other robbery," suggested the constable.

Robert looked up. Mary was staring at him. As she caught his eyes, she raised a finger to her lips and pressed them in a way that might have meant either nothing or a great deal.

Presently the constable picked up his shotgun, felt of his revolvers, and departed. The neighbors lingered only to congratulate Dr. Horton.

"It was nothing but the hand of Providence," he replied to each of them.

Robert went to his room, and the old folks to theirs. Mary locked the doors. The money was safe under Dr. Horton's pillow, and his room door was locked and perhaps barricaded.

As she turned out the lights, the gray of the dawn showed against the windows. In another moment Tim's eyes would be blind. She hurried upstairs to him. His hands were held out to her. Red was sitting up in bed, staring happily at the lithe man with the winning ways.

"It's all right. Everything's all right, Tim!"

"Mary!"

"Yes, dear!"

"Pick up the baby and hold him by the window."

She obeyed, wondering.

"Mary! Mary!" He struggled to keep down the rising lump in his throat. "Is the sun up?"

"It's just coming up."

"But I can see you fine, there with the little one at your breast. He's at your breast, isn't he, Mary?"

He came a step nearer to her.

"Yes—he's just where he sleeps every night."

"You're his real mother. I can see you holding him, and I can see there's tears in your eyes—and what's this silver, Mary?"

He had reached her, and his arms were tight about her and her precious burden.

"The sunshine, Tim!"

"For you and me and Red, Mary! Oh, thank God for His mercy!"

THE END

### AUTUMN COLORS

ALL the colors of the world  
Are walking everywhere;  
Hand in hand they walk abroad  
And drink the autumn air.

Red goes marching like a king  
Over hill and dale;  
Purple throngs in crowding hosts  
Where far vistas fail;

And, although her flowers are dust,  
And summer's self is fled,  
Here and there a peak of green  
Still lifts its dauntless head.

Harry Kemp